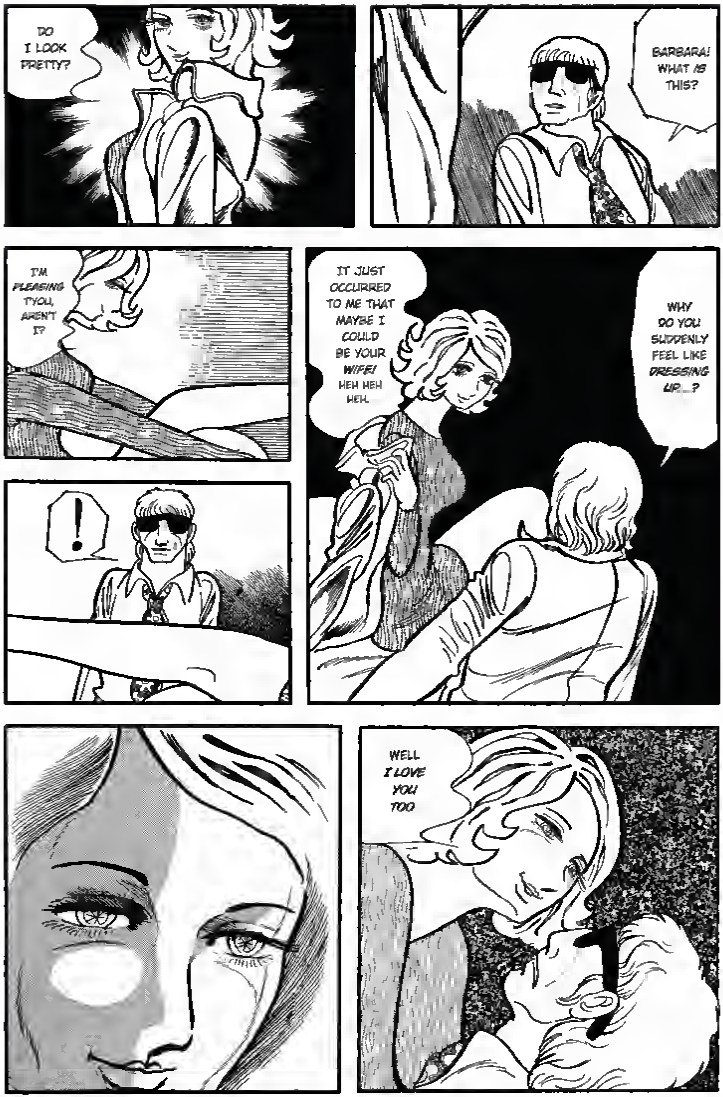
GETTING YOUR ENDORSEMENT FOR THE TOKYO GOVERNOR'S ELECTION FEELS LIKE COMMANDING A LOYAL ARMY A MILLION STRONG, SENSEI! WAHAHAHA.
I endorse this man for Tokyo governor
Susie Aihara
GONPACHIRO SATOMI
Current Speaker of the House
XX Party
HERE IS THE POSTER
BY THE WAY, THIS IS THE ELECTION COMMITTEE SCHEDULE...
MY OPPOSITION WILL THINK, "DAMN, HE'S GOT US NOW!" WAHAHA HAHA!

UGH...?
HE IS A BUSY MAN, AFTER ALL!
HEY DON'T PUT TOO MUCH PRESSURE ON MR. MIKURA!
SIR!
MR. SATOMI ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
WHUMP
S-SIR!
TH-THIS IS TERRIBLE!
THEN HE WON'T RECOVER?
IT LOOKS LIKE A CLASSIC CEREBRAL APOPLEXY ... IT MAY ALREADY BE TOO.

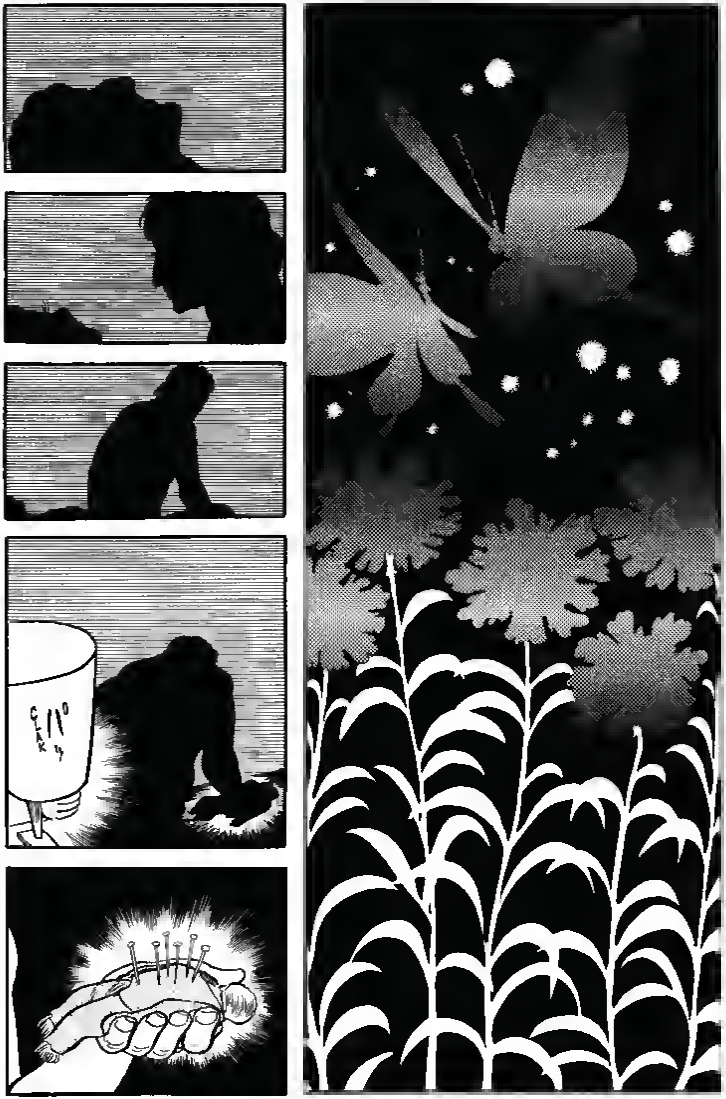
A SUDDEN FEELING OF EMPTINESS CAME OVER ME
HEY. YOU'RE A LITTLE TOO CALM ABOUT THIS!
I'M COOKIN' SWEET POTATOES
I HEARD OLD MAN SATOW COLLAPSED I GUESS NO ONE'LL NEED THESE ELECTION POSTERS NOW...
WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
ACTUALLY I'M AT A BIT OF A LOSS MYSELF
I WISH THAT WERE THE CASE
SO YOU'LL HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THAT OLD MAN ANYMORE, RIGHT?

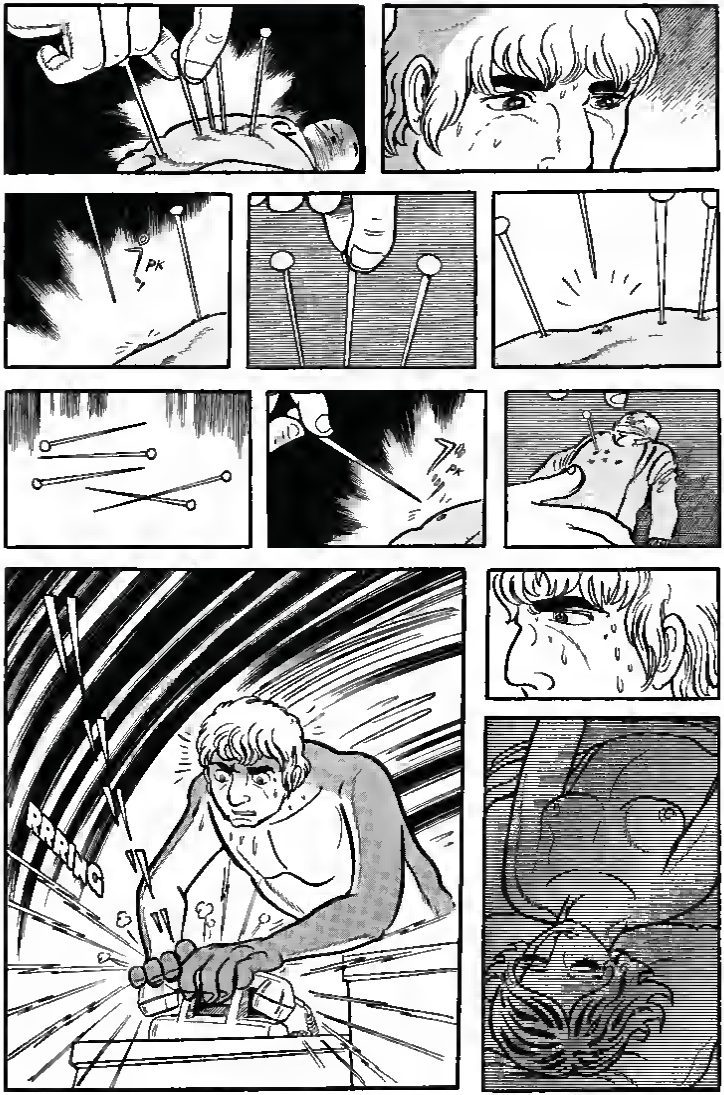
HE DOESN'T REALLY HAVE THAT MUCH APPEAL TO BEGIN WITH.
WELL, HE MAY BE THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE, BUT I'M NOT SURE HOW MUCH I'D ACTUALLY SUPPORT HIS GOVERNOR'S CAMPAIGN.
I BOUGHT THIS...


DO I LOOK PRETTY?
BARBARA! WHAT IS THIS?
I'M *PLEASING* YOU, AREN'T I?
IT JUST OCCURRED TO ME THAT MAYBE I COULD BE YOUR *WIFE!* HEH HEH HEH.
WHY DO YOU SUDDENLY FEEL LIKE *DRESSING UP*...?
!
WELL *I LOVE YOU TOO*

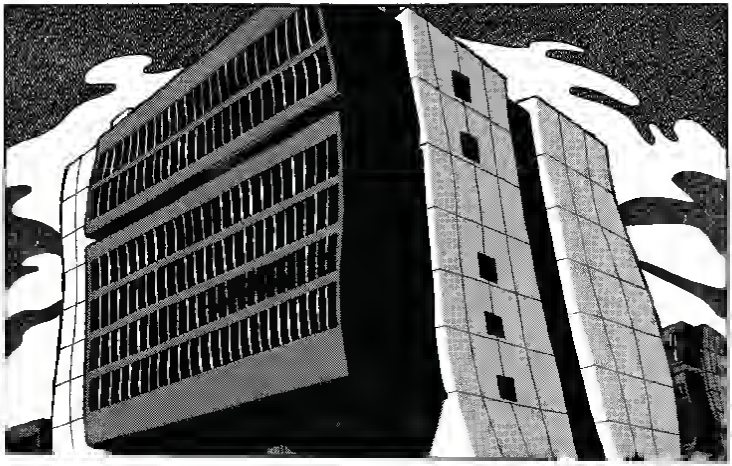
FOR THE FIRST TIME, BARBARA SHOWED ME HER WOMANLY SIDE AND SHE TRANSFORMED INTO A MAGNIFICENT WOMAN...
I DIDN'T CARE ABOUT THAT. SHE WAS SIMPLY A WOMAN.
AND SHOWED ME HER TRUE SELF. BUT WHY DID SHE WAIT...?
BARBARA TOOK OFF HER MASK...

MY INTUITION TELLS ME THAT.
YOU LOVE ME, SENSEI.
YOU'RE RIGHT
WILL YOU MARRY ME?
WHEN I WAS DRUNK AND EMBRACED YOU, WHY DID YOU RUN AWAY?
AND HERE I THOUGHT THE WORD MARRIAGE WASN'T IN YOUR VOCABULARY!
NOW I THINK YOU AREN'T.
WHAT ABOUT NOW?
AND YOU WERE CAUGHT UP IN SOME TEMPTATIONS THEN, TOO.
MY HEART WASN'T READY BACK THEN
BARBARA... I WANT YOU.

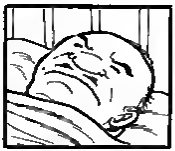


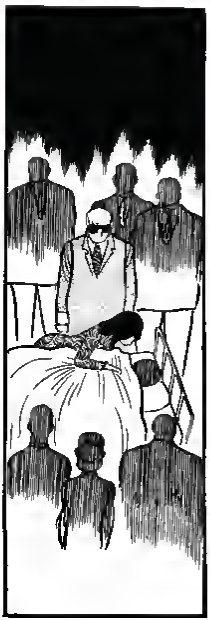

PK
PK

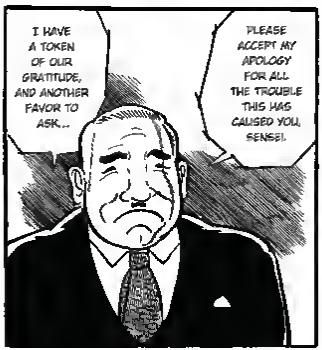
NO!!
I'LL BE RIGHT BACK. WAIT FOR ME
YOU CAN'T! I WON'T LET YOU!
YOU CAN'T GO!!
BUT...
BUT I HAVE TO GO
DON'T EVER SPEAK WITH THAT HORRIBLE POLITICIAN AGAIN!
ASSHOLE!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
WHAT? HELLO?
HELLO . HELLO?
I'LL BE RIGHT THERE!
MR. SATOH IS IN CRITICAL CONDITION!



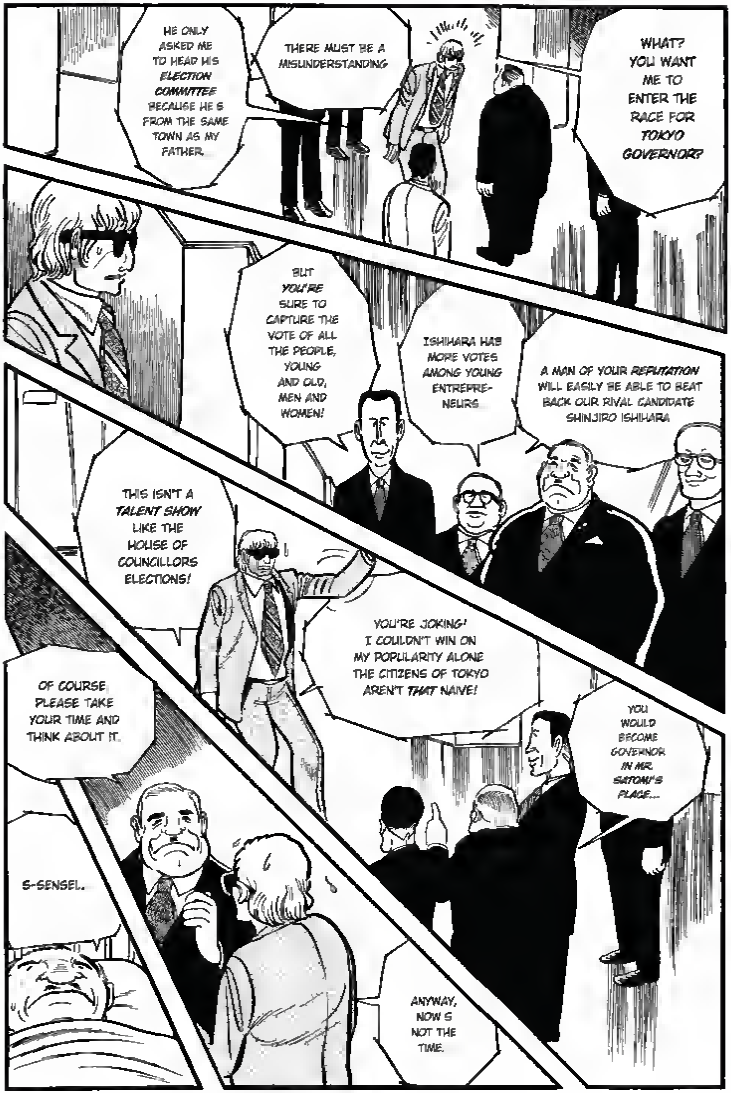
FOR SUCH A TRAGEDY TO BEFALL MR. SATOMI...
I AM PRESIDENT INOGUCHI OF THE XX PARTY



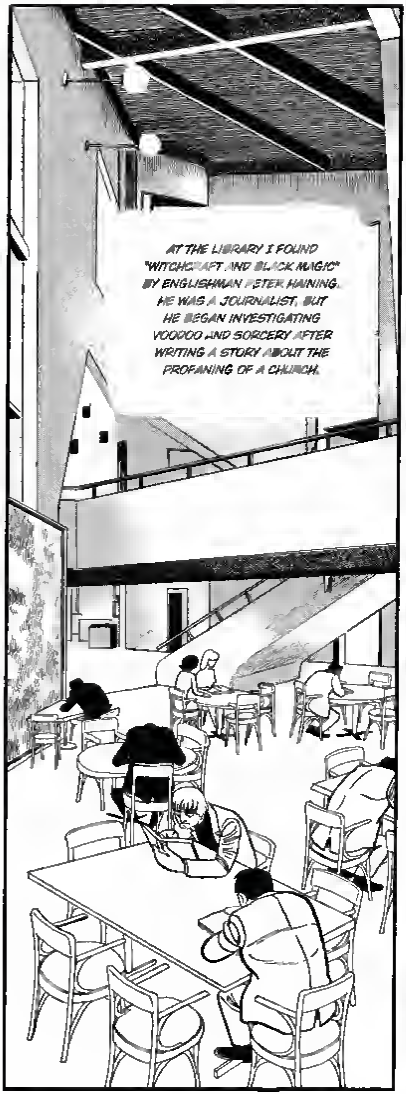


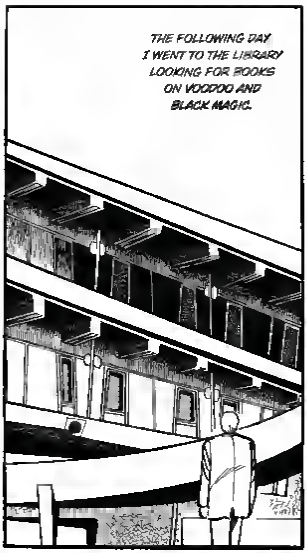

I HAVE A TOKEN OF OUR GRATITUDE, AND ANOTHER FAVOR TO ASK...
PLEASE ACCEPT MY APOLOGY FOR ALL THE TROUBLE THIS HAS CAUSED YOU, SENSEI.

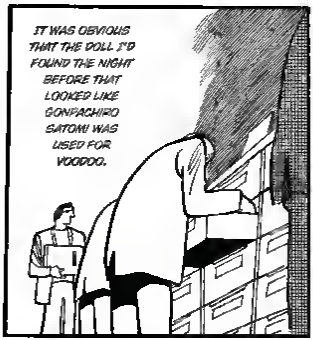
OH, SEN-SEI!


WHAT? YOU WANT ME TO ENTER THE RACE FOR TOKYO GOVERNOR?
THERE MUST BE A MISUNDERSTANDING
HE ONLY ASKED ME TO HEAD HIS ELECTION COMMITTEE BECAUSE HE'S FROM THE SAME TOWN AS MY FATHER.
A MAN OF YOUR REPUTATION WILL EASILY BE ABLE TO BEAT BACK OUR RIVAL CANDIDATE SHINJIRO ISHIHARA
ISHIHARA HAS MORE VOTES AMONG YOUNG ENTREPRE-NEURS
BUT YOU'RE SURE TO CAPTURE THE VOTE OF ALL THE PEOPLE, YOUNG AND OLD, MEN AND WOMEN!
THIS ISN'T A TALENT SHOW LIKE THE HOUSE OF COUNCILLORS ELECTIONS!
YOU'RE JOKING! I COULDN'T WIN ON MY POPULARITY ALONE THE CITIZENS OF TOKYO AREN'T THAT NAIVE!
YOU WOULD BECOME GOVERNOR IN MR. SATOH'S PLACE...
OF COURSE. PLEASE TAKE YOUR TIME AND THINK ABOUT IT.
S-SENSEI..
ANYWAY, NOW'S NOT THE TIME.

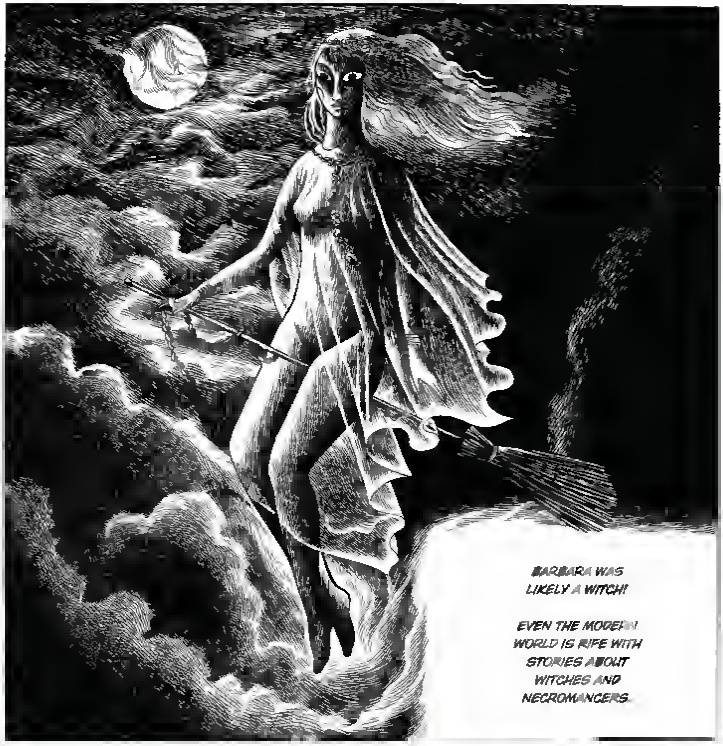
IF YOU REFUSE.. I WON'T BE ABLE TO DIE IN PEACE...
B-BUT ...
PLEASE TAKE MY PLACE.... I KNOW THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY-GENERAL HAVE BOTH ASKED YOU TO...
PAPA!
UNGH!
HOW CAN I SHOW MY FACE TO YOUR FATHER ON THE OTHER SIDE... IF YOU SAY NO?
PLEASE SAY YES, SENSEI!

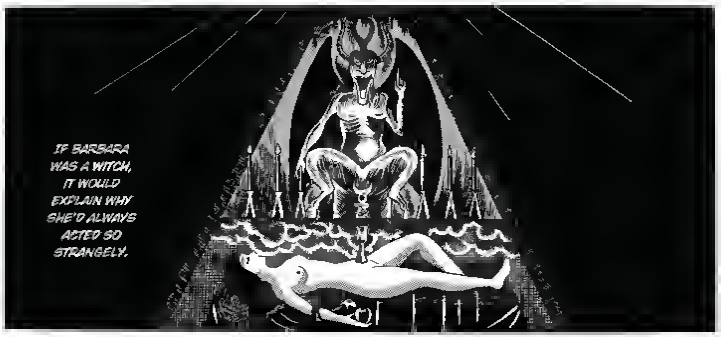

AT THE LIBRARY I FOUND "WITCHCRAFT AND BLACK MAGIC" BY ENGLISHMAN PETER HAINING. HE WAS A JOURNALIST, BUT HE BEGAN INVESTIGATING VOODOO AND SORCERY AFTER WRITING A STORY ABOUT THE PROFANING OF A CHURCH.

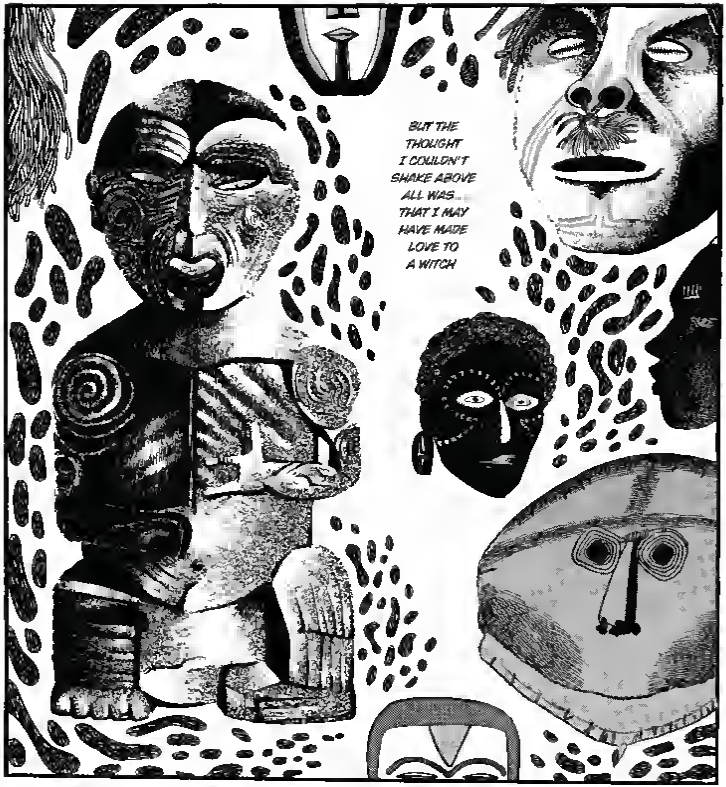

THE FOLLOWING DAY I WENT TO THE LIBRARY LOOKING FOR BOOKS ON VOODOO AND BLACK MAGIC.


IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT THE DOLL I'D FOUND THE NIGHT BEFORE THAT LOOKED LIKE GONPACHIRO SATOMI WAS USED FOR VOODOO.

VOODOO
SATOMI HAD BEEN THE VICTIM OF A VOODOO CURSE.


BARBARA WAS LIKELY A WITCH!
EVEN THE MODERN WORLD IS RIPE WITH STORIES ABOUT WITCHES AND NECROMANCERS.

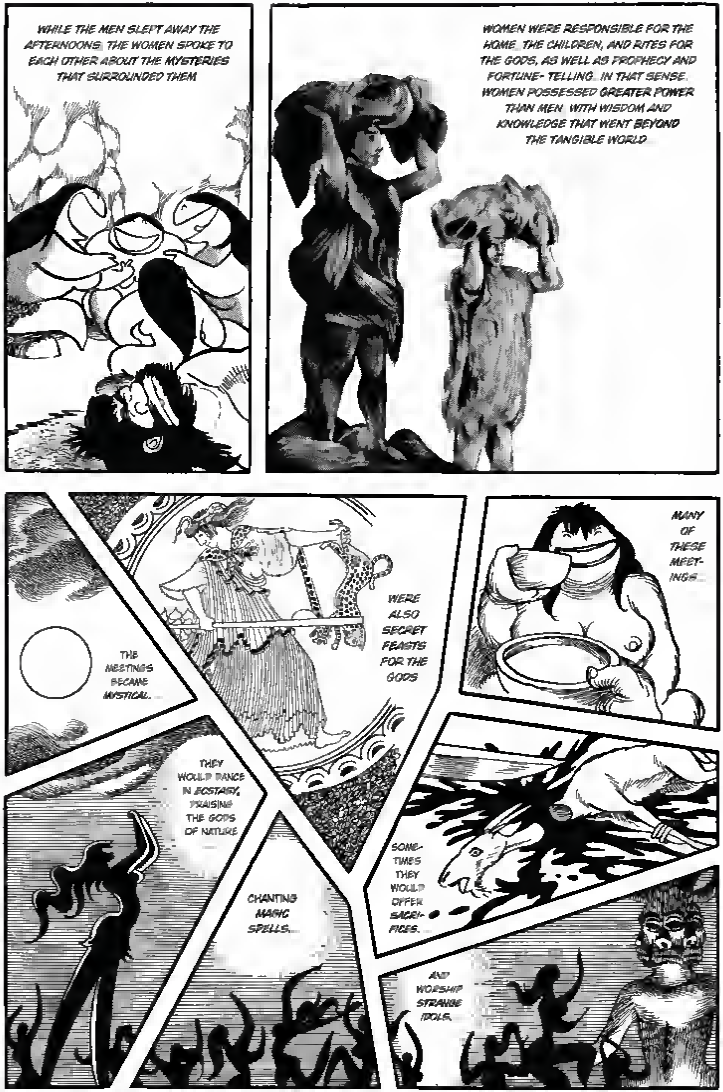

IF BARBARA WAS A WITCH, IT WOULD EXPLAIN WHY SHE'D ALWAYS ACTED SO STRANGELY.


BUT THE THOUGHT I COULDN'T SHAKE ABOVE ALL WAS... THAT I MAY HAVE MADE LOVE TO A WITCH

PERHAPS I'D FALLEN UNDER HER SPELL, AND THAT WAS WHY I COULDN'T GET RID OF HER!

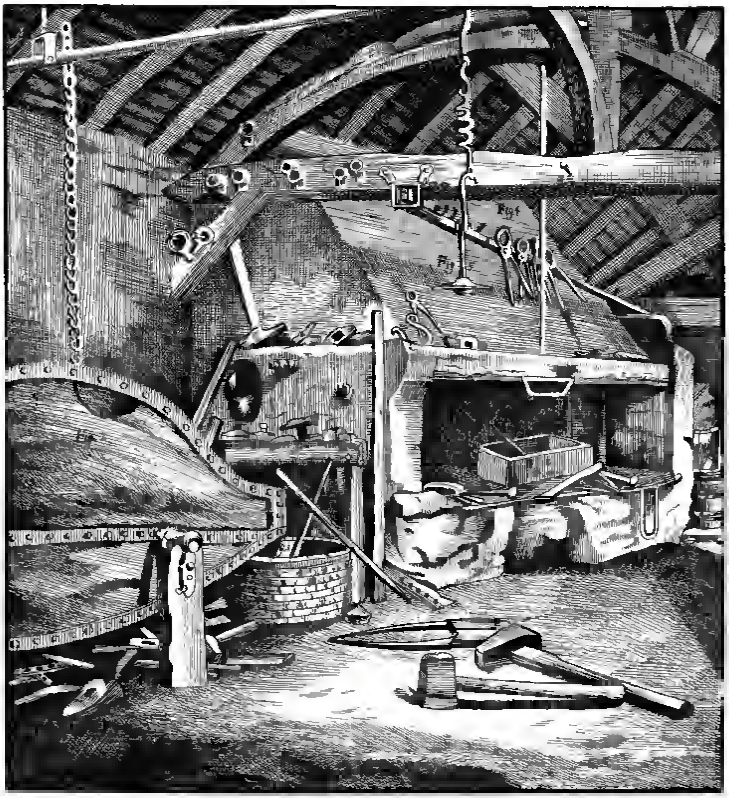
WHAT EXACTLY IS A WITCH? WELL, THEY DATE BACK TO PREHISTORIC TIMES.

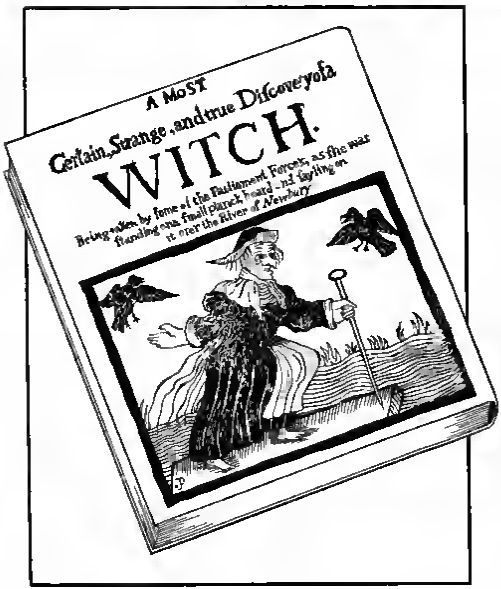
SINCE THE DAWN OF HUMANITY, WOMEN HAVE BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH THE MYSTICAL.


WHILE THE MEN SLEPT AWAY THE AFTERNOONS, THE WOMEN SPOKE TO EACH OTHER ABOUT THE MYSTERIES THAT SURROUNDED THEM.
WOMEN WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE HOME, THE CHILDREN, AND RITES FOR THE GODS, AS WELL AS PROPHECY AND FORTUNE-TELLING. IN THAT SENSE, WOMEN POSSESSED GREATER POWER THAN MEN. WITH WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE THAT WENT BEYOND THE TANGIBLE WORLD.
THE MEETINGS BECAME MYSTICAL...
WERE ALSO SECRET FEASTS FOR THE GODS
MANY OF THESE MEETINGS...
THEY WOULD DANCE IN ECSTASY, PRAISING THE GODS OF NATURE
CHANTING MAGIC SPELLS...
SOMETIMES THEY WOULD OFFER SACRIFICES...
AND WORSHIP STRANGE IDOLS.

IN SOME CASES WOMEN DANCED STRADDLING BROOMSTICKS. THE BROOMSTICK WAS A SYMBOL OF THE ORDER AND PEACE OF THE HOME
EVENTUALLY THESE SECRET CEREMONIES WERE PASSED DOWN AS SPELLS. SOME BELIEVE SORCERY AND MAGIC WERE PART OF THE FABRIC OF THE ANCIENT WORLD. BUT THESE TRADITIONS WERE ALSO TRANSMITTED BY WITCHES AND SORCERERS.
WEARING STRANGE MASKS AND WIELDING BIZARRE IMPLEMENTS, THEY CHARMED PEOPLE WITH TRICKS AND HYPNOTISM. WITCHES COULD SUPPOSEDLY TRANFORM INTO ANIMALS, FLY THROUGH THE AIR AND LIVE FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS

THESE OLD FAITHS WERE PERSECUTED BY NEW RELIGIONS AS THE CENTURIES PASSED. SO-CALLED WITCH TRIALS AND PURGES BECAME RAMPANT. SUSPECTED WITCHES WERE SUBJECTED TO CRUEL TORTURE.



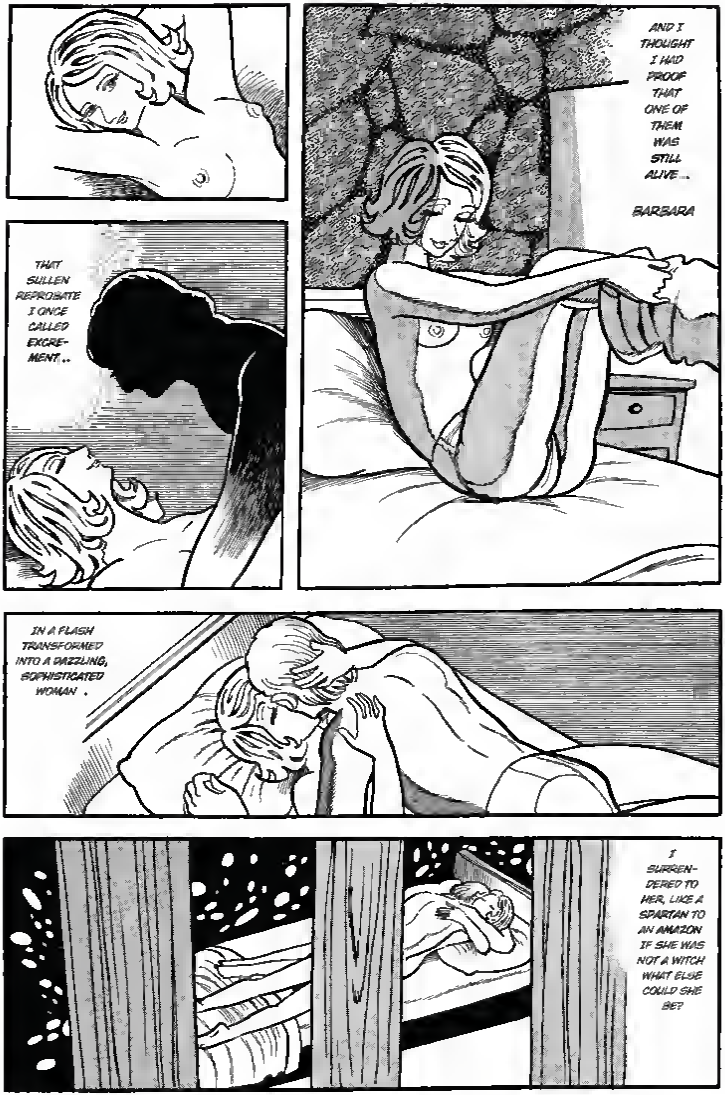

A MoST
Certain, Strange, and true Discovery of a
WITCH.
Being taken by some of the Parliament Forces, as she was
flourishing over their Head and fighting on
it near the River of Newbury

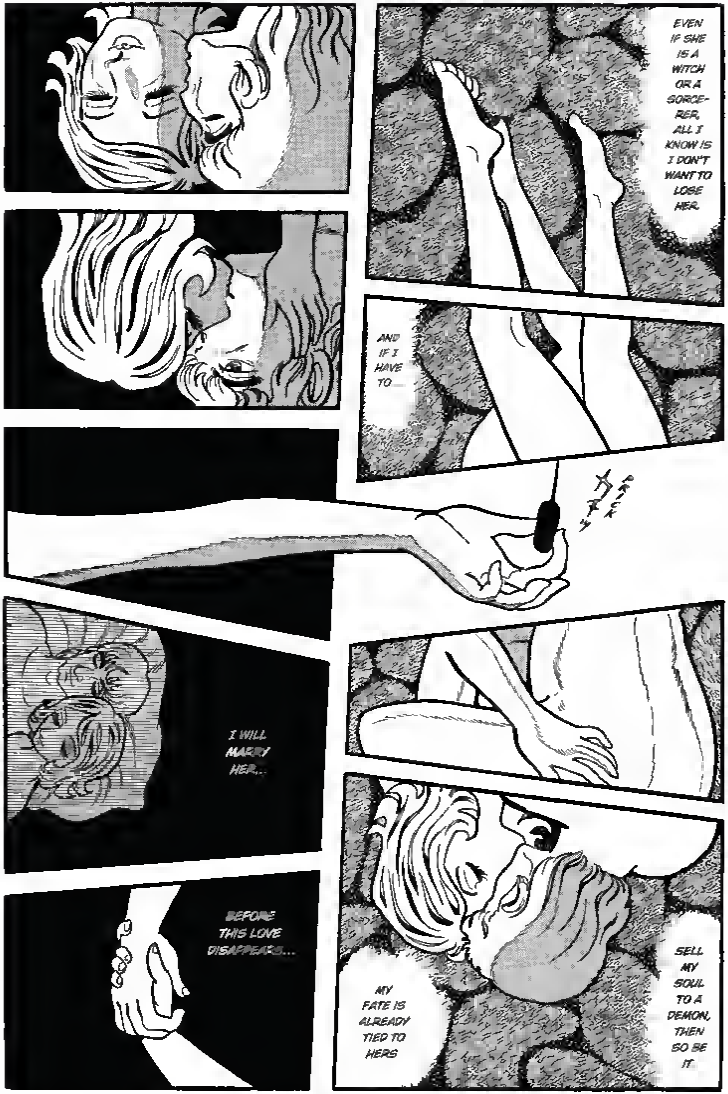
YET WITCHCRAFT DID NOT DIE OUT. AND NEW MAGIC SPELLS AND CURSES CONTINUED TO APPEAR.

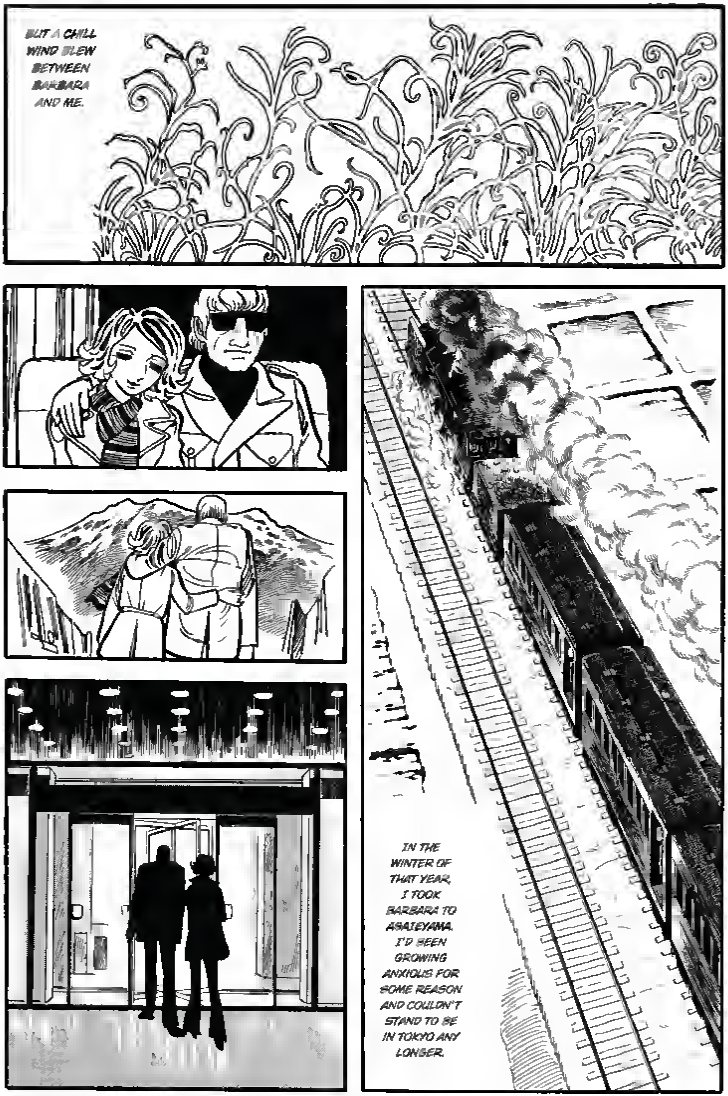
TODAY, NO ONE CAN DENY THAT SORCERERS AND WITCHES EXIST. AT FOOTBALL MATCHES IN NAIROBI KENYA, THERE ARE REPORTS OF SORCERERS WHO PUT SPELLS ON RIVAL TEAMS, WHILE IN THE CONGO TO THIS DAY SOLDIERS SMEAR IMMORTALITY ELIXIRS MADE BY MAGICIANS ON THEIR BODIES BEFORE GOING INTO BATTLE. IN SCOTLAND, THERE ARE WITCHES WHO TAKE ORDERS FOR FLYING SALVES AND IN BOSTON THERE IS A COVEN WITH 13 WITCHES THERE IS EVEN ONE WITCH RECOGNIZED BY THE STATE. HER NAME IS LOUISE HUEBNER.

SO-CALLED BLACK MAGIC IS SORCERY THAT DRAWS UPON THE OBSCENE WORSHIP OF DEMONS.
GOOD MAGIC.
IS CALLED WHITE MAGIC.
SERIOUS WITCHES WORK FOR THE GOOD OF ALL AND PRACTICE ONLY WHITE MAGIC.
THE MOST FAMOUS WITCH IN THE UNITED STATES IS SYBIL LEEK, WHOSE MOTHER IS ALSO A WITCH. SHE ABSOLUTELY REFUSES TO PERFORM MAGIC FOR PAY, AS SHE PUTS IT—
"THE UNITED STATES HAS A FEW ESTABLISHED COVENS, BUT SO TIMES AS MANY PSEUDO ONES AS ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD. HOWEVER, WE ARE SEEING MORE AND MORE GENUINE COVENS BEING ESTABLISHED... AND THERE IS NO DOUBT IN MY MIND THAT IT WILL NOT BE LONG BEFORE WITCHCRAFT IS ACCEPTED AS A VALID RELIGION TO TAKE ITS PLACE ALONGSIDE ALL THE OTHERS..."

WITH ITS ROOTS IN AFRICA, VOODOO INCLUDES A FORM OF BLACK MAGIC. ITS DARK RITUALS AND SPELLS BLEND CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS, LIVING SACRIFICE AND SEXUAL ECSTASY
IT REPUDIATES ANY HUMAN MORALITY, AND ITS LITURGY IS KNOWN AS A BLACK MASS.
BUT I PREFERRED TO BELIEVE THAT THE SINGULAR BEINGS KNOWN AS WITCHES REALLY DID EXIST
WERE MOSTLY BASED ON SUPERSTITION, LEADING TO INDISCRIMINATE EXECUTIONS.
THE MEDIEVAL WITCH TRIALS...


AND I THOUGHT I HAD PROOF THAT ONE OF THEM WAS STILL ALIVE...
BARBARA
THAT SULLEN REPROBATE I ONCE CALLED EXCREMENT..
IN A FLASH TRANSFORMED INTO A DAZZLING, SOPHISTICATED WOMAN.
I SURRENDERED TO HER, LIKE A SPARTAN TO AN AMAZON IF SHE WAS NOT A WITCH WHAT ELSE COULD SHE BE?


EVEN IF SHE IS A WITCH OR A SORCERER, ALL I KNOW IS I DON'T WANT TO LOSE HER.
AND IF I HAVE TO...
I WILL MARRY HER...
BEFORE THIS LOVE DISAPPEARS...
MY FATE IS ALREADY TIED TO HERS
SELL MY SOUL TO A DEMON, THEN SO BE IT.


BUT A CHILL WIND BLEW BETWEEN BARBARA AND ME.
IN THE WINTER OF THAT YEAR, I TOOK BARBARA TO ASAIEYAMA. I'D BEEN GROWING ANXIOUS FOR SOME REASON AND COULDN'T STAND TO BE IN TOKYO ANY LONGER.

OH, YES. MICHITOMO ISAITO FROM NIKKYO.
THAT COMPOSER SHUDO-SENSEI IS ALSO STAYING HERE
HE WAS ONE OF JAPAN'S GREAT MUSICAL GENIUSES, GRADUATING AT THE TOP OF HIS CLASS FROM SHULLIARD ACADEMY...
BARBARA, YOU ALL RIGHT?

NO, I'M STILL LISTENING
ARE YOU DONE? LET'S GO TO OUR ROOM.
CLAP CLAP
CLAP CLAP
STOP THAT! HOW COULD YOU?
IT WAS THEN THAT I REALIZED I WAS JEALOUS OF SHIDO!

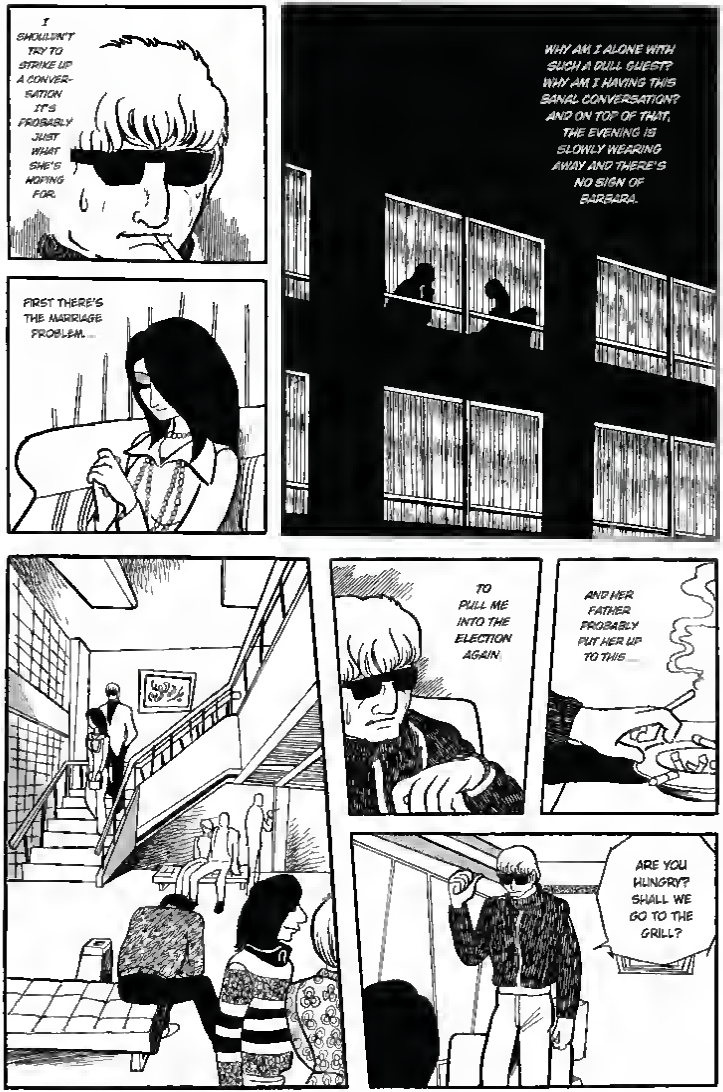
WANT TO GO SKIING ?
WE PLAYED LIKE WILD RABBITS ON THE SKI SLOPES.

I'M AFRAID WE HAVE A PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT THIS EVENING. BARBARA, LET'S HEAD BACK.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN ME TONIGHT IN MY ROOM FOR A DRINK?
I'M MICHITOMO SHIRO YOU'RE YŌSUKE MIKURA, THE WRITER, AM I RIGHT? I SAW YOU LAST NIGHT
HE'S SURPRISINGLY POLITE.

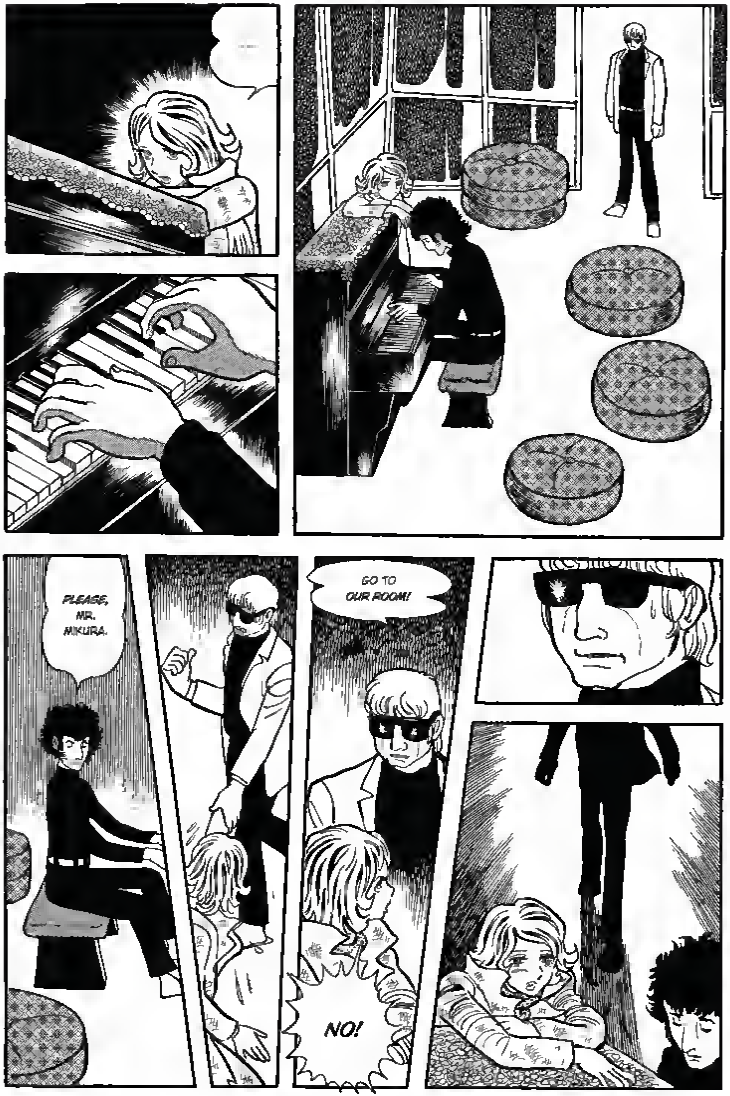
...!!
WE DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO...
DO WE LOOK LIKE WE'RE INTERESTED IN DRINKING IN A TOTAL STRANGER'S ROOM?
SENSEI, YOU HAVE A GUEST.
PLEASE DON'T BE UPSET AT ME FOR COMING WITHOUT ASKING. MY FATHER SENDS HIS KINDEST REGARDS.
MISS SACHIKO!
CLANK
A GUEST?

YOU JUST SUDDENLY LEFT HOME ... AND I GOT SO WORRIED I COULDN'T SIT STILL
NO, THAT WASN'T ALL ...
YOU CAME ALL THE WAY UP HERE IN THE SNOW JUST TO TELL ME THAT?
THAT IS WORRI-SOME.
THE DOCTORS STILL WON'T ALLOW VISITORS.
ANYWAY HOW IS YOUR FATHER?
I WOULD THINK HIS STAFF COULD SETTLE ALL OF THAT
WHAT WITH MY FATHER'S CONDITION, AND THE ELECTION ... I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO ..
HEY... BARBARA, ORDER US SOME TEA FROM ROOM SERVICE.
THE LAWYER SAID THAT THE PROCEDURES TO TRANSFER MY FATHER'S ESTATE TO ME ARE ALREADY UNDERWAY ...
BARBARA!
IS SOMETHING WRONG?

BARBARA, DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME? WHY ARE YOU WEARING THOSE OLD RAGS AGAIN...?
A SKI RESORT IS NO PLACE TO DRESS LIKE SUCH A BUM.
THIS PLACE HASN'T GOT ANY ROOM SERVICE
...I'LL GO GET IT...
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HER? WHERE'S THE BARBARA FROM A MOMENT AGO? WHY DID SHE SUDDENLY GO BACK TO LOOKING LIKE THAT?
YOU'RE STILL PAYING THAT RAGGED TRAMP?
BUT I'M AFRAID I CAN'T SKI
IN THAT CASE YOU CAN LEARN FROM BARBRA UH, FROM ONE OF THE INSTRUCTORS.
. IS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME ON AGAIEYAMA?
YES, IT IS.

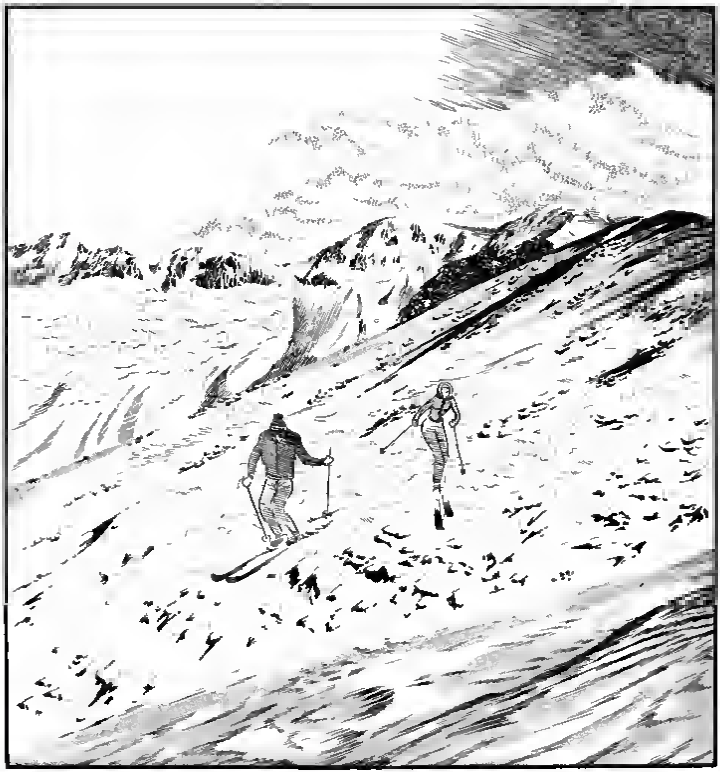

I SHOULDN'T TRY TO STRIKE UP A CONVERSATION IT'S PROBABLY JUST WHAT SHE'S HOPING FOR.
WHY AM I ALONE WITH SUCH A DULL GUEST? WHY AM I HAVING THIS BANAL CONVERSATION? AND ON TOP OF THAT, THE EVENING IS SLOWLY WEARING AWAY AND THERE'S NO SIGN OF BARBARA.
FIRST THERE'S THE MARRIAGE PROBLEM...
TO PULL ME INTO THE ELECTION AGAIN!
AND HER FATHER PROBABLY PUT HER UP TO THIS...
ARE YOU HUNGRY? SHALL WE GO TO THE GRILL?

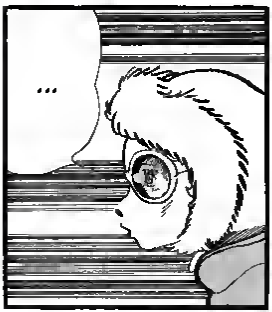
...
PLEASE SIT WHEREVER YOU LIKE I'LL BE WITH YOU SHORTLY
I DON'T SEE BARBARA ANYWHERE WHERE HAS SHE DISAPPEARED TO? OF COURSE SHE MUST BE THERE...
GRILL BAR
SHAH
WHERE HAS SHE GONE WITH THAT MAN?
KCHA
KCHA
OF COURSE !
BARBARA!
I WENT STRAIGHT TO MICHITOMO SHIDO'S ROOM
I CAN HEAR THE PIANO!

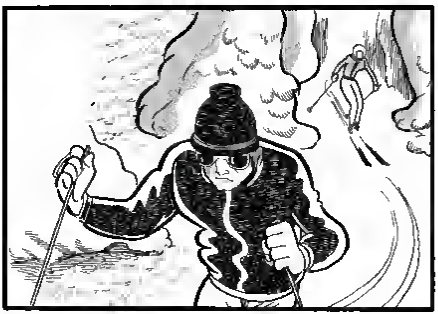

PLEASE, MR. MIKURA.
GO TO OUR ROOM!
NO!

I AM PLAYING HER SPECIFIC REQUEST. DON'T YOU THINK YOU ARE BEING A LITTLE *RUDE*?
WHAT ARE YOU *DOING* ?!
QUIET!!
THAT'S RIGHT! I ASKED 'IM. IT'S DEBUSSY'S *CLAIR DE LUNE* *YOU'RE* HAVIN' FUN WITH THAT WOMAN, RIGHT?
I DON'T *CARE* WHAT KIND OF PERSON SHE IS..
SHE LEFT OUR ROOM HOURS AGO AND I'VE BEEN LOOKING EVERYWHERE FOR HER.
I'M SORRY, BUT THIS WOMAN ISN'T *REFINED* ENOUGH TO APPRECIATE YOUR MUSIC.
...
I HAVE *NO REASON* TO DO THAT.
SHE CAME HERE TO LISTEN TO *ME* PLAY THE PIANO. I WOULD LIKE YOU TO LET HER LISTEN TO THE END, AT LEAST.
MR. MIKURA, I'M SURE YOU WOULD BE UPSET TOO IF SOMETHING *YOU* HAD WRITTEN WERE SNATCHED AWAY WHILE SOMEONE WAS READING IT.

OF COURSE, BARBARA! DAMN IT! THIS IS A CURSED DOLL!
WHEN ?
WHO LEFT THIS HERE?
THIS DOLL LOOKS JUST LIKE ME
SHE CAN'T BE TRYING TO







NO, WE KEEP GOING
THE WHISKY I BROUGHT IS ALMOST GONE, TOO
HEY, LET'S GO BACK, ALL RIGHT?
IT GOES ON FOREVER! I'M TELLING YOU, THERE'RE NO HOUSES THIS WAY. JUST A MONTH AGO SOME SKIERS KEPT CLIMBING AND ENDED UP LOST!
JUST SHUT UP AND FOLLOW ME
PSH. WHY SO MOODY?
ALL RIGHT, HERE'S FINE.

WHA?
BARBARA! YOU'RE A WITCH, AREN'T YOU?
WHEN RUSSALKA WAS KILLED THAT SHOP YOU TOOK US TO- WITH THAT OLD WOMAN, MNE-MNEMOSYNE.. IT DISAPPEARED FROM THAT ALLEY WITHOUT A TRACE!
LOOK AT ME! I WANT TO GET THIS STRAIGHT
YOU MAKE HIM MY MANAGER, THEN HE DISAPPEARS COMPLETELY!
THERE'S MORE! YOU BROUGHT IN SOME DRIFTER WHO LOOKED EXACTLY LIKE ME
IT'S REAL! WHERE DID SHE GET IT?
THE PICASSO MNEMOSYNE GAVE ME WAS ALL THAT WAS LEFT..
WAS THAT THING REALLY SO VALUABLE ?

WITH YOUR SORCERER COMRADES?
OH, THAT... HE JUST GOT TIRED OF MANAGING AND WENT BACK TO HIS OLD LIFE
HE JUST WENT MISSING!
AFTER HE MARRIED PRESIDENT KAI'S DAUGHTER
SO WILL YOU ADMIT YOU'RE A WITCH?
TOO MANY STRANGE THINGS HAVE HAPPENED SINCE I MET YOU. IT'S LIKE YOU'RE TOYING WITH ME!
I CAN'T DO THAT
JUST LET ME GO BACK! I'M GONNA FREEZE OUT HERE.
WHO CARES?
THIS IS A VOODOO DOLL FOR CURSING PEOPLE, ISN'T IT?
I FOUND THIS IN THE ROOM. IT LOOKS EXACTLY LIKE ME.

IS IT MY TURN NOW? WHEN WILL YOU CURSE MY DOLL?
WAS SATOMI CURSED?
CAN YOU HONESTLY TELL ME THERE WAS NO CONNECTION?
THERE WAS ANOTHER DOLL THAT LOOKED LIKE GONPACHIRO SATOMI, WITH NEEDLES STABBED INTO IT. I FOUND IT THE SAME DAY SATOMI COLLAPSED FROM A CEREBRAL APOPLEXY!
COME ON! LET ME GO!
YOU'RE TRYING TO KILL ME, AREN'T YOU?
I COULD THROW YOU OUT AT ANY TIME! BUT WHENEVER I DID YOU JUST CAME BACK LIKE A DOG... AND YET YOU STILL MADE THESE DOLLS!
IT'S JUST A STRAW DOLL!
YOU...!
SPASH

WAIT!
I'M GOING BACK! I WON'T STAND HERE AND BE INTERROGATED LIKE THIS!
DERELICT! WITCH!
YOU CAN'T GO UNTIL THIS IS SETTLED!
DAMN!
STABBING A CURSED DOLL TO CAUSE DEATH OR INJURY IS THE MOST COMMON FORM OF BLACK MAGIC. ONCE IN PARIS, A GROUP OF BLACK SORCERERS CARRIED OUT A SPATE OF VIOLENT MURDERS THEY WOULD STAB DOLLS RESEMBLING KING HENRY III WITH KNIVES AND SPRINKLE THEM WITH URINE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR, A WITCHES' COVEN WOULD SOMETIMES GATHER IN A PARK IN WASHINGTON TO CHANT PRAYERS TO DEVILS AND STICK PINS INTO A DOLL OF HITLER TO TRY TO PLACE A CURSE ON HIM.

YES...
WELCOME BACK, SIR. YOU WENT VERY FAR OUT TODAY
WHEN I GET OUT OF THE BATH I'LL MAKE SURE TO GET AN ANSWER.
PHEW... I CAN'T BEAT BARBARA ON SKIS, THAT'S FOR SURE
I'LL BRING IT UP AGAIN AFTER I TAKE A BATH...
SSSH
IDIOT! THIS ISN'T A COMMUNAL BATH!
HEY! AT LEAST KNOCK!

HMMFF
BARBARA!!
SPLISH
BLUB
SPLASH
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? ONCE AGAIN BARBARA LEAPS INTO MY ARMS OUT OF NOWHERE.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE TITLE "THE SCARLET THORN?"
BARBARA, I'M STARTING TO FEEL LIKE WRITING ANOTHER BOOK.
MIKURA-SENSEI, SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAS HAPPENED
ALL RIGHT I'M GONNA USE THIS FEELING TO DIVE IN AND WRITE!
HE SLID INTO THE GUARD RAIL...
SHIDO-SENSEI LEFT HERE IN A CAR...
WHAT IS IT?
THERE WAS AN ACCIDENT. HE IS BADLY INJURED

HE ALSO TOOK SEVERAL OF THE LADIES WHO'D BEEN WATCHING HIM PLAY UP TO HIS ROOM.
YES, SHIDO-SENSEI BROUGHT THEM HERE FROM TOKYO
THREE HOSTESS-ES?
THREE BAR HOSTESSES FROM TOKYO WHO WERE RIDING WITH HIM WERE KILLED
OH, AND SENSEI, WE FOUND A *STRANGE DOLL.* IT'S MADE OF STRAW, AND IT WAS STUCK ALL OVER WITH PINS.
SHIDO SEEMED LIKE SUCH A *SAINT.* I GUESS YOU CAN'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER.
WEE-WOO WEE-WOO
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
IT WAS IN SHIDO-SENSEI'S ROOM.

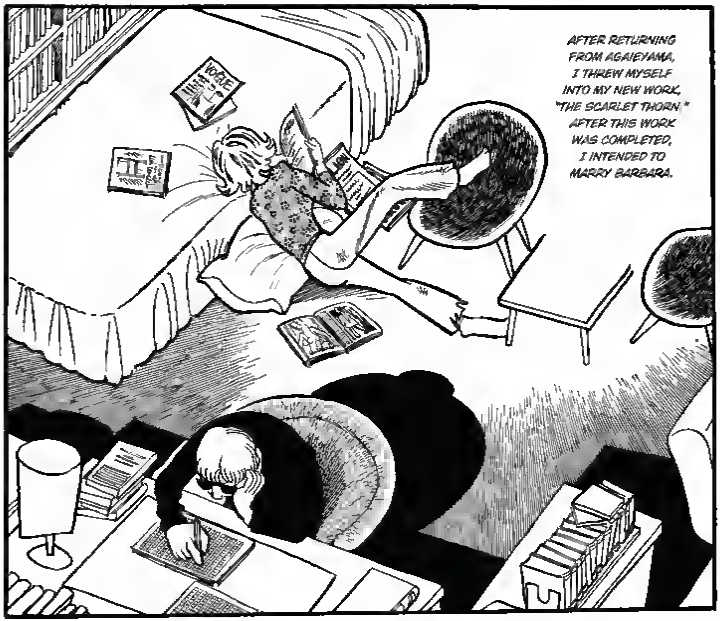
AUTHOR'S NOTE:

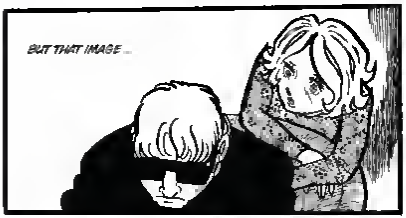
I relied heavily upon the Shufu-to-Seikatsusha edition of "Witchcraft and Black Magic" (Peter Haining, translated by Tsuneo Morishima) for the explanations of witchcraft.

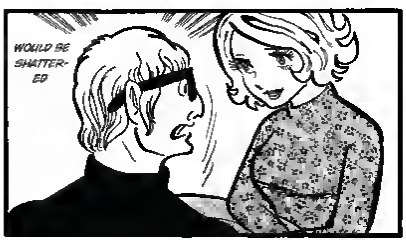
Barbara ばるばら

CHAPTER ELEVEN.

THE BLACK MASS


AFTER RETURNING FROM AGAIEYAMA, I THREW MYSELF INTO MY NEW WORK, "THE SCARLET THORN." AFTER THIS WORK WAS COMPLETED, I INTENDED TO MARRY BARBARA.


BUT THAT IMAGE ...


WOULD BE SHATTER-ED

I THOUGHT OF HOW WE WOULD LOOK EXCHANGING SAKE CUPS IN A SHINTO WEDDING, AND IT WAS SO RIDICULOUS I COULDN'T HELP SMILING.

ISN'T THAT A DEMONIC RITUAL? I ADMIT IT'D MAKE A UNIQUE SHOW BUT I WANT TO DO THIS PROPERLY!
WHAT? YOU WANT TO DO IT AT A BLACK MASS?
WELL I'M NOT CONVERTING TO VOODOO.
MY RELATIVES INSIST ON IT THEY'RE ALWAYS BABBLING ON ABOUT TRADITIONS...
WHO WAS IT WHO SAID THAT THE COMEDY ENDS WITH THE WEDDING, THEN THE TRAGEDY BEGINS?
THAT'S FINE, AS LONG AS YOU GO THROUGH WITH THE CEREMONY THEY WON'T CARE.
THEY SAID ONE WITNESS WOULD BE ALL RIGHT...
SO THE ONLY PEOPLE THERE WILL BE WITCHES AND YOUR FAMILY? I CAN'T INVITE ANY GUESTS?
ONE... WELL, AT LEAST IT WON'T COST ME ANYTHING
AN ECCENTRIC CEREMONY WOULD MAKE THE PERFECT COMEDIC CLIMAX.

COME IN.
KNOCK KNOCK
コンコン
ゴゴゴゴ
SO BARBARA ASKED FOR SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
SHE DIDN'T TELL ME, OF COURSE.
I AM THE HEAD OF THE JAPAN BRANCH OF THE SOCIETY OF THE GREAT MOTHER GODDESS THERE WAS A REQUEST PLACED FOR A MATCHMAKER...
SO ARE YOU A... ER... WIZARD?
WH-WHO ARE YOU?
WE HAVE FAMILY REGISTRIES JUST LIKE REGULAR PEOPLE, AND DECENT JOBS
THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD DO NOT UNDERSTAND US.
I'M SORRY, YOU'RE NOT AT ALL WHAT I WAS EXPECTING

THEY ARE CEREMONIAL.
BUT WHAT ABOUT YOUR SORCERIES AND CURSES?
SO YOU MAY THINK OF US AS BELIEVERS IN A RELIGION
JUST AS AN EXCEEDINGLY NORMAL SALARYMAN MAY NONETHELESS BE A BELIEVER IN A SO-CALLED "NEW RELIGION."
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, I HAVE
SURELY YOU'VE SEEN ALL THE SHOWS RECENTLY ABOUT E.S.P. AND SPIRIT MEDIUMS?
YOU SUFFER THROUGH IT ON TV ALL THE TIME.
THERE ARE SOME FORMALITIES TO TAKE CARE OF
THAT IS WHY I CAME TODAY
SO, WHAT WOULD I DO AT THIS CEREMONY?
FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE, THE STATE OF TODAY'S SOCIETY IS MUCH MORE DEMONIC.

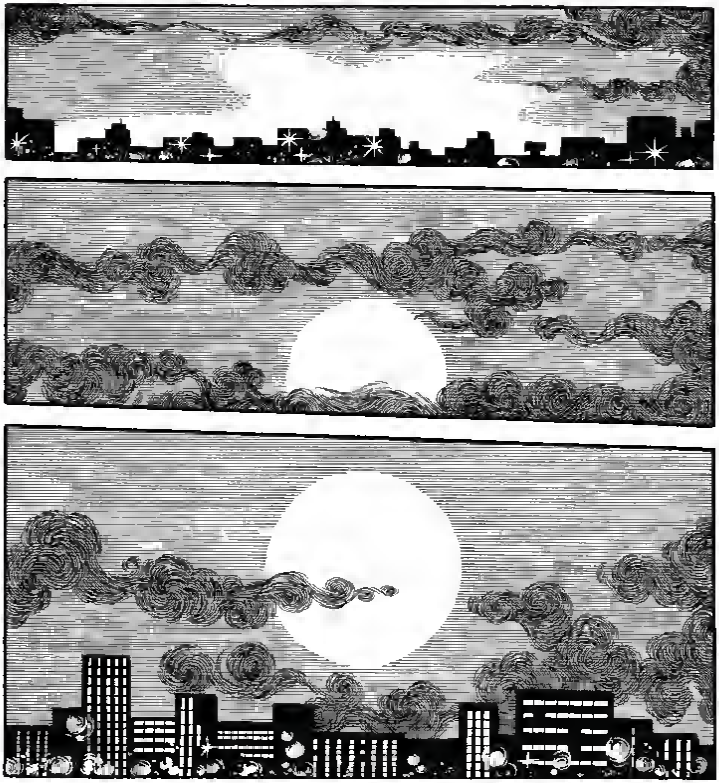
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? EVEN TODAY, THE YAKUZA STILL USE BLOOD SEALS.
EVEN IN THE POLITICAL WORLD THE SEIRANKAI SEALS OATHS IN BLOOD
IN BLOOD ?!
THAT IS CORRECT. IN ANCIENT TIMES, THEY CALLED IT A BLOOD COVENANT.
B-BUT SURELY IN THIS DAY AND AGE...
PLEASE SEAL THIS IN BLOOD.
HOLD OUT YOUR FINGER. YOUR PINKY WILL BE FINE
WE USE IT FOR MARRIAGE VOWS
NGH-
AH...

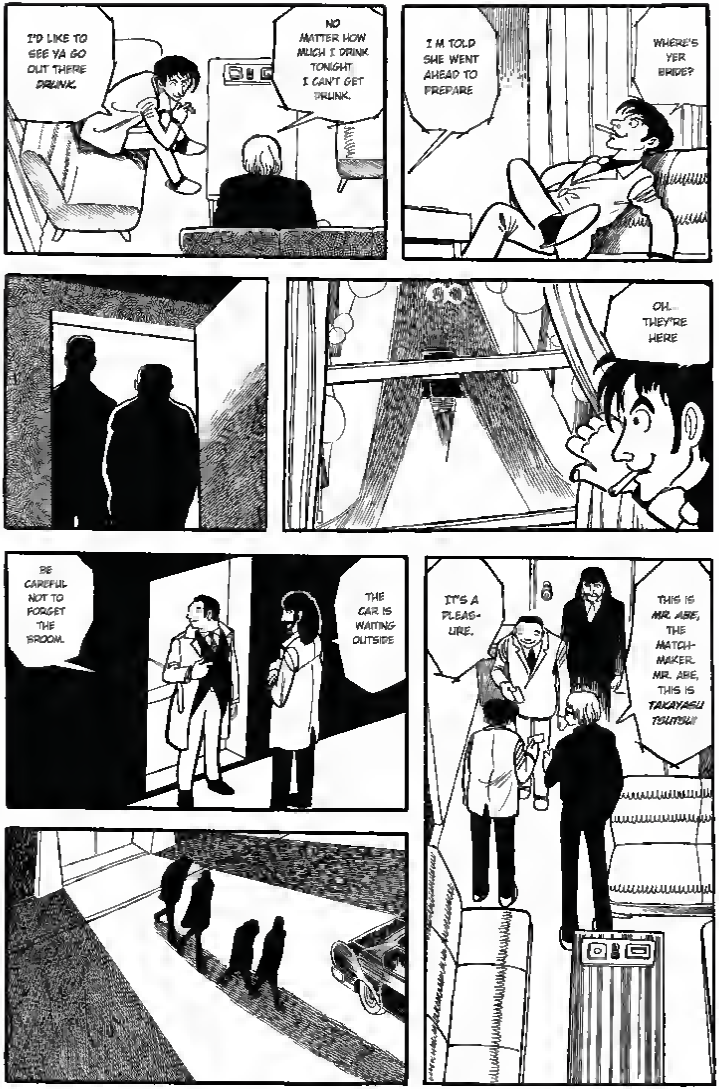
IT TINGLED FOR A MOMENT...
THAT IS BECAUSE THE VOW IS SACRED YOU ARE RECEIVING THE BLESSING OF THE MOTHER GODDESS
BY THE WAY HAVE YOU DECIDED UPON YOUR WITNESS?
HERE IS THE PROGRAM FOR THE CEREMONY
HOW ABOUT MY FELLOW AUTHOR TAKAYASU TSUTSUI?
TSUTSUI-SENSEI... YES, I'M QUITE FAMILIAR WITH HIS WORK.
HIS WIT IS POSITIVELY DEMONIC!
THAT'S WHY I'M SURE HE'LL BE HAPPY TO COME

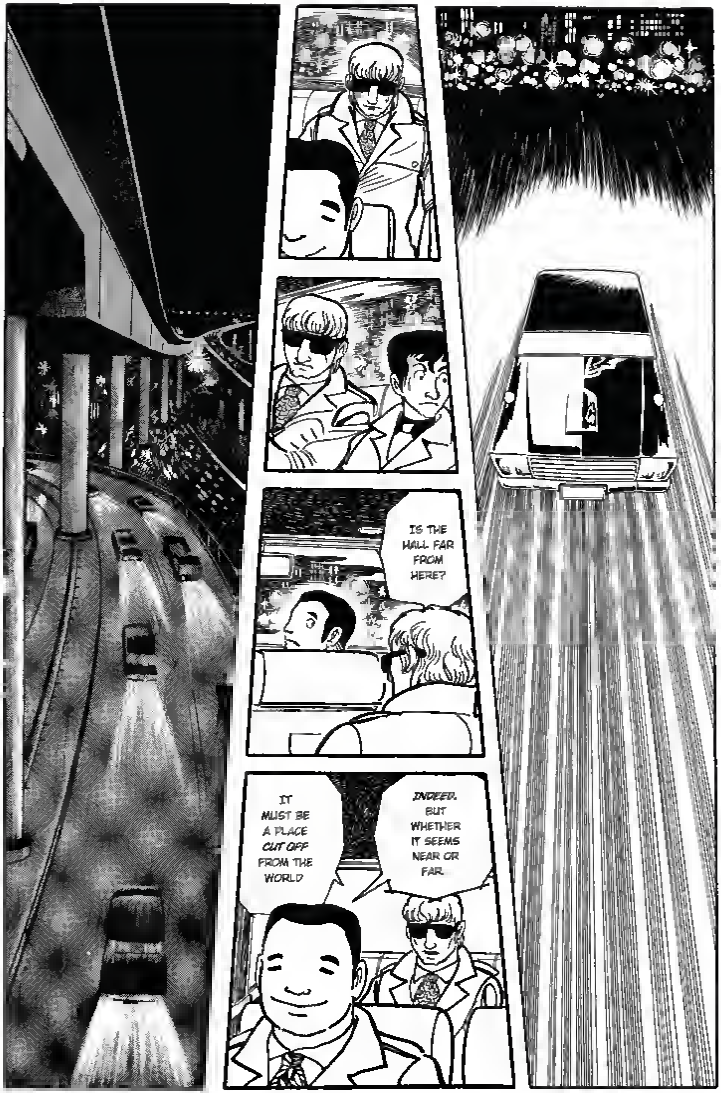
AND PLEASE TAKE THIS...
PLEASE GIVE IT TO THE BRIDE ON THE DAY OF THE WEDDING
IT'S A GOOD LUCK CHARM.
A BROOM? SURELY YOU'RE NOT GOING TO ASK ME TO FLY AWAY ON THIS...
THIS WON'T INVOLVE ANYTHING THE POLICE WOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT WILL IT?
I FEEL AS IF I'VE HAD A SPELL CAST ON ME BUT YOU KNOW I DON'T LIKE PRANKS
NOT UNLESS YOU TELL THEM.
DID THE MATCH-MAKER COME?
HE DID INDEED

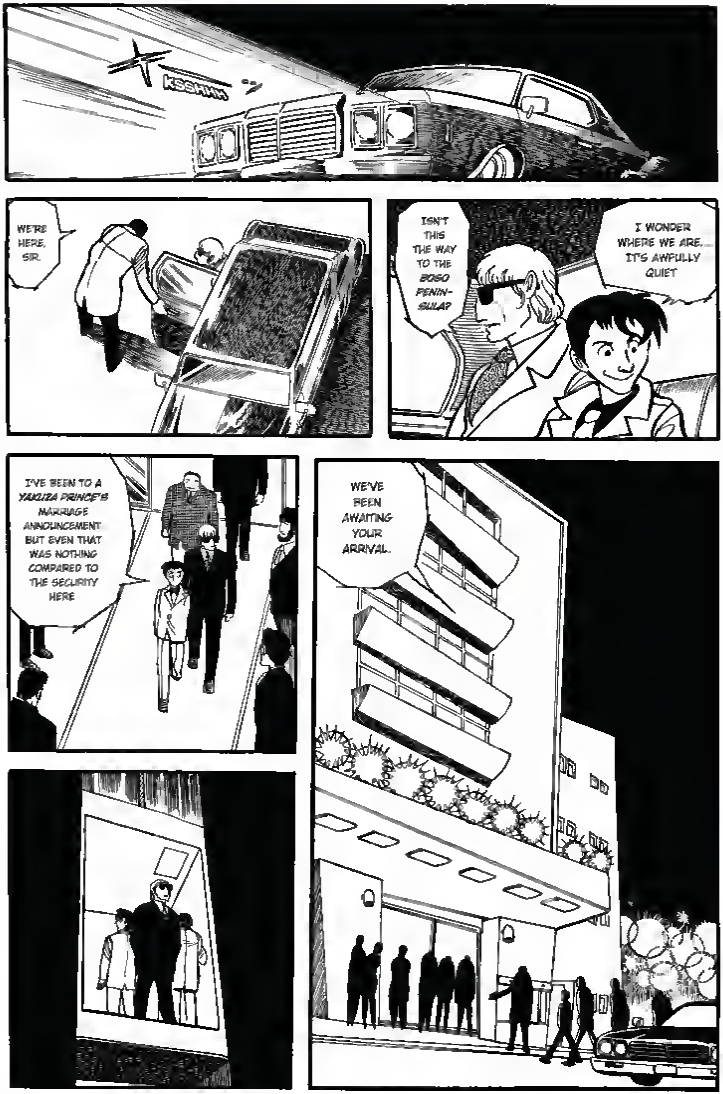
ANOTHER WEEK PASSED, AND I FINISHED "THE SCARLET THORN."
IT WAS A STRANGE EXPERIENCE.
HMM. I SEE YOU'VE WRITTEN ANOTHER UNUSUAL WORK.
Renoir
I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO FIND HER YET... SENSEI, I HOPE YOU CAN UNDERSTAND MY FEELINGS AS A FATHER...
HOW IS YOUR DAUGHTER?
THE CEREMONY WILL BE HELD IN SECRET, BUT... I WOULD AT LEAST LIKE TO HOLD A PARTY AND MAKE THE ANNOUNCEMENT.
WHAT?
AFTER ALL, I'M GOING TO BE MARRIED SOON MYSELF.
I DO

THEN SHE DREW A CIRCLE ON THE FLOOR IN CHALK AND CROUCHED DOWN IN THE MIDDLE.
A WEEK BEFORE, BARBARA STOPPED DRINKING ALCOHOL, COMPLETELY.
HEY MIKURA! ARE YOU GOING TO GO WEARING A HAT WITH A THREE-POINTED STAR ON IT? WILL THERE BE AN ORGY?
DON'T EXPECT TOO MUCH, TSUTSUI JUST DRESS CASUAL
THE CEREMONY WAS SCHEDULED FOR FIFTEEN DAYS LATER. THE DIVINER SELECTED THE DATE AS THE MOST AUSPICIOUS.

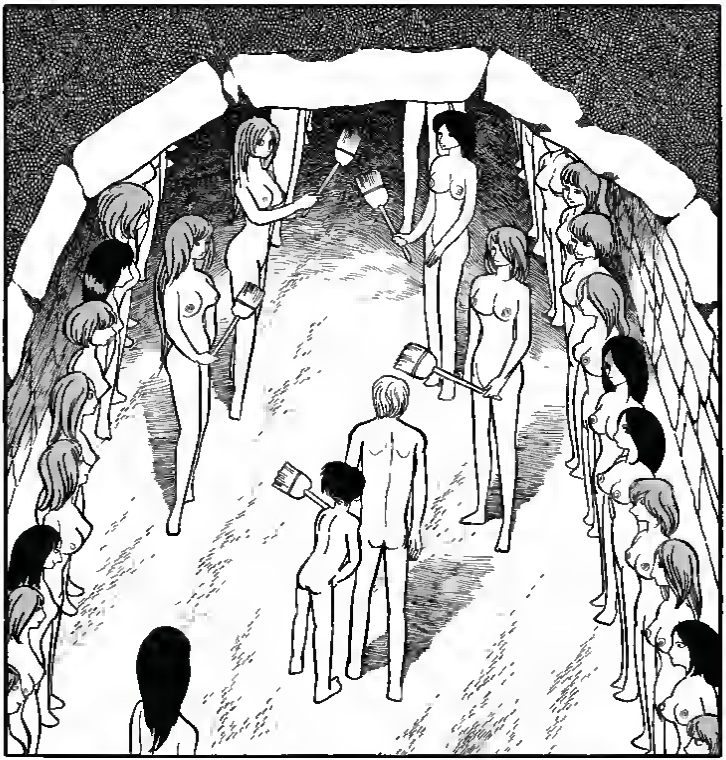

THEY'RE GOING TO COME GET US SOON. UNTIL THEN, YOU WANT A DRINK?
YA LOOK PALE! YA READY TO BE A LIVIN' SACRIFICE?
EVENIN'!

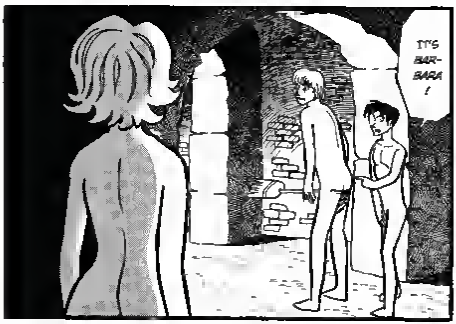

I'D LIKE TO SEE YA GO OUT THERE DRUNK.
NO MATTER HOW MUCH I DRINK TONIGHT I CAN'T GET DRUNK.
I'M TOLD SHE WENT AHEAD TO PREPARE
WHERE'S YER BRIDE?
OH... THEY'RE HERE
BE CAREFUL NOT TO FORGET THE BROOM.
THE CAR IS WAITING OUTSIDE
IT'S A PLEASURE.
THIS IS MR. ABE, THE MATCH-MAKER. MR. ABE, THIS IS TAKAYASU TSUTSUI!


IS THE HALL FAR FROM HERE?
IT MUST BE A PLACE *CUT OFF* FROM THE WORLD
INDEED. BUT WHETHER IT SEEMS NEAR OR FAR.

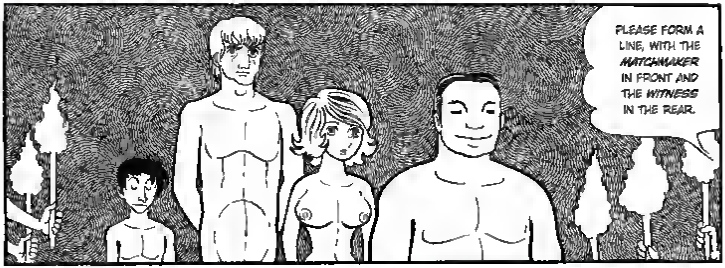

KISHIN
WE'RE HERE, SIR.
ISN'T THIS THE WAY TO THE BOBO PENINSULA?
I WONDER WHERE WE ARE... IT'S AWFULLY QUIET
I'VE BEEN TO A YAKUZA PRINCE'S MARRIAGE ANNOUNCEMENT BUT EVEN THAT WAS NOTHING COMPARED TO THE SECURITY HERE
WE'VE BEEN AWAITING YOUR ARRIVAL.

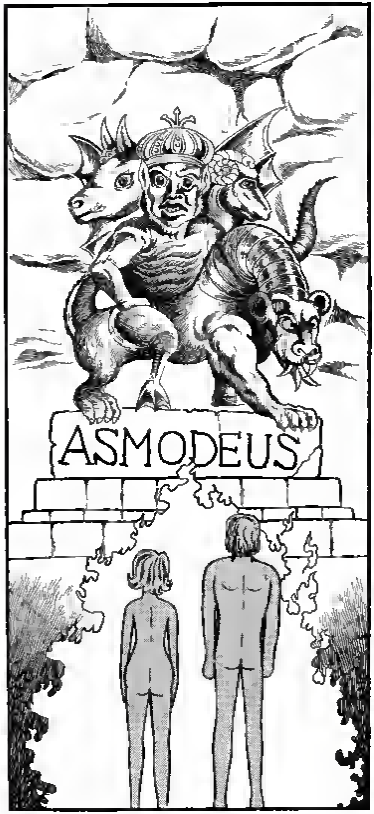
WHAT ?
PLEASE DEPOSIT YOUR CLOTHING HERE
IT IS WRITTEN AT THE END OF THE PROGRAM
I AIN'T BEEN TOLD ABOUT THAT
YOU MEAN GO NAKED?
THAT MEANS WITH A NAKED BODY.
"WITH A SACRED BODY."
WELL, JUST THINK OF IT LIKE ONE OF THE BIG HOTEL BATHS IN HAKONE
SO YER SAYIN' THIS'S A NUDIST CLUB? HOW INTERESTIN'... HAHAHA!
OH NO!

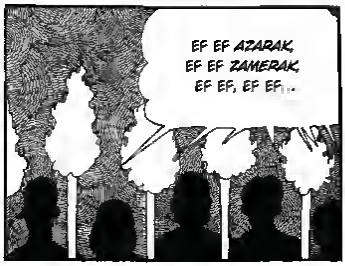



IT'S BARBARA!

WHO'DA THOUGHT THERE'D STILL BE A PLACE LIKE THIS IN JAPAN!
IF SOMEONE'D TOLD SAKYO KOMATSU ABOUT THIS HE MIGHT NEVER A WRITTEN "JAPAN SINKS"


PLEASE FORM A LINE, WITH THE *MATCHMAKER* IN FRONT AND THE *WITNESS* IN THE REAR.


ASMODEUS


EF EF *AZARAK*,
EF EF *ZAMERAK*,
EF EF, EF EF...

GREAT GODS OF THE EAST, WEST, SOUTH AND NORTH... WE SUMMON YOU TO LOOK UPON OUR RITUALS, AND TO PROTECT ALL WHO ARE GATHERED HERE... COME FORTH!
HERE A FRESH UNION OF MAN AND WOMAN STANDS BEFORE THE GODS TO TAKE THIS SOLEMN OATH
PRESENT THE BROOM-STICK TO THE BRIDE.
EXCEPT FOR ALL THAT DEMON SUMMONING STUFF, OF COURSE
IT'S PRETTY SIMILAR TO A SHINTO PRAYER, ACTUALLY
SIGH.

HEY LOOK IT'S A LIVING SACRIFICE!
BRING FORTH THE OFFERING TO THE GODS
I GUESS THEY USE IT TO LIVEN THINGS UP.
SMELLS LIKE MARIJUANA.
PASS THIS AMONG YOU, AND SMOKE FROM IT IN TURN.
THE WEDDING IS CANCELED!
CLEAR THE HALL AND PUT YOUR CLOTHES ON!
WONDER WHAT'S UP.

ONE OF THOSE IN ATTENDANCE HAS BROKEN HOLY DISCIPLINE!
WHAT'S WRONG?
THE WEDDING IS CANCELED!
WE'RE CLOSING THE HALL!
PUT ON YOUR CLOTHES!
IT'S A POLICE RAID!
AAAHH!

IT'S CANCELED? PUT OUR CLOTHES ON? BUT I JUST STRIPPED THEM OFF.
MNFF... EHEHEH. ENHEHE HEH...
W-WU-WUHH...
EHEH... UNH... UGH. MNFF...
HOW COULD YOU BE SO CRUEL? PUTTING YOUR BRIDE THROUGH SOMETHING LIKE THIS...
IF IT ISN'T MNEMO-SYNE!
BWAAAH

WHICH ONE OF YOU BETRAYED US?
ONE OF YOU MUST HAVE TOLD SOMEONE WITH A BIG MOUTH ABOUT THIS.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS IS! WHAT'S GOING ON?
HEY NOW, I DIDN'T SAY A WORD!
THIS IS EXACTLY WHY WE CAN'T TRUST PEOPLE IN THE MEDIA!
I- I DON'T KNOW!
I TOLD THE PRESIDENT OF KAI BOOKS I WAS GOING TO BE MARRIED!
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT...
I SWEAR TO GOD- OR THE DEVIL, I GUESS- ANYWAY, I DEFINITELY KEPT MY MOUTH SHUT!
THE POLICE HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING MR. TSUTSUI'S CAR SINCE HE LEFT FOR THE BRIDEGROOM'S HOUSE THE PROBLEM IS, WHO DID HE TELL ABOUT THE WEDDING AND WHEN?

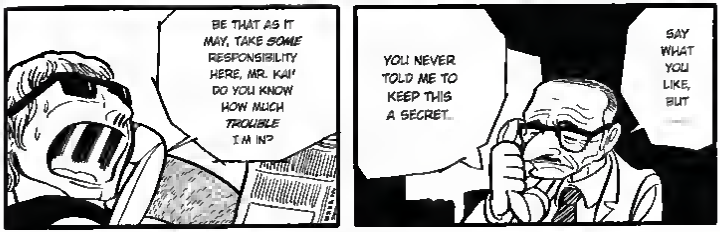
GET THE GROOM DRESSED, NOW!
HE WOULDN'T
HE MUST HAVE TOLD A REPORTER ABOUT IT!
WHAT KIND OF MAN IS THIS KAI?
PLEASE WAIT!
AND ANYWAY WE HAVE A WARRANT, SO YOU MUST LET US INVESTIGATE..
SHOULD BE ALL RIGHT IF YOU HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE
WE'RE A LEGITIMATE, REGISTERED WEDDING VENUE THERE IS NOTHING SUSPICIOUS, .
ARREST THEM!
NO SENSE COVERING YOURSELF NOW!
WA-!

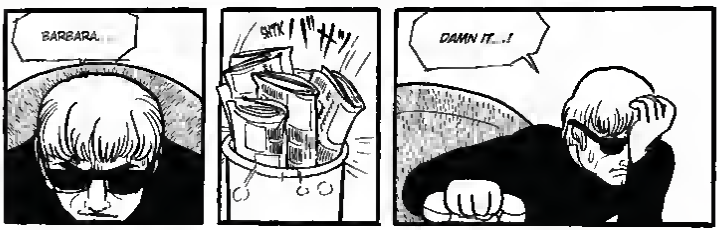
WAIT!
RUN!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
FUCKIN' FASCIST.
GET DRESSED
YOU'VE GOT NO RIGHT TO IT. HE WAS PHOTOGRAPHING THE SCENE
GIMME THAT FILM!
YOU BASTARD, HAND OVER THE FILM!

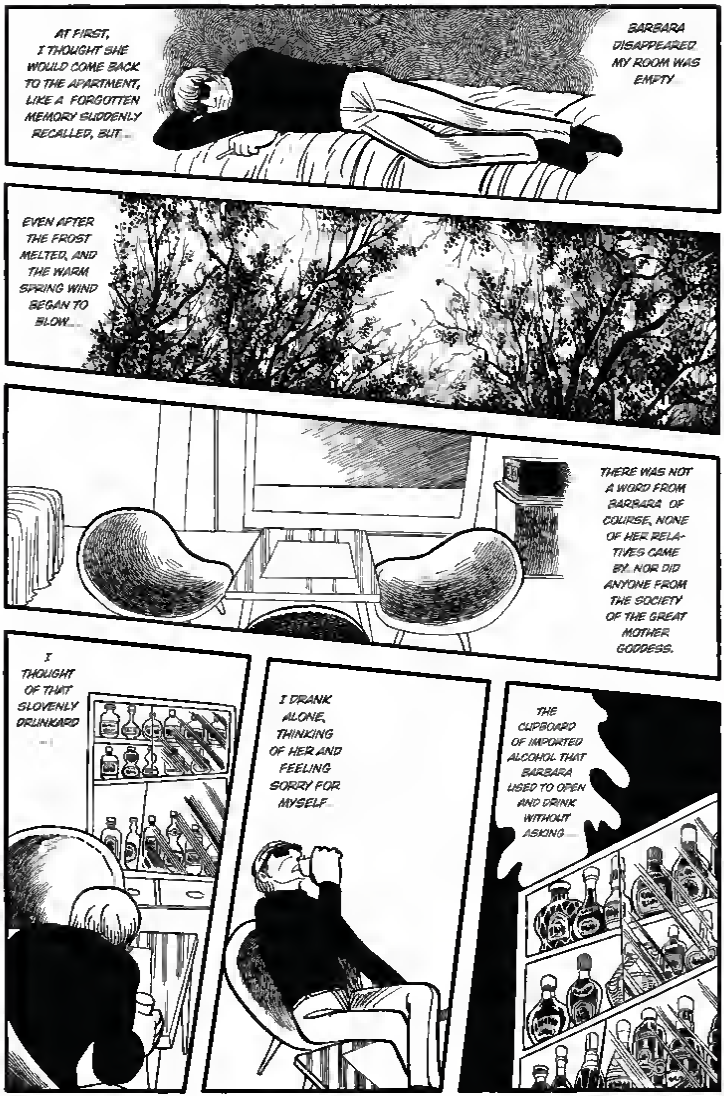
OH, HELLO THERE, MIKURA-SENSEI...
I'M SURPRISED TO SEE YOU AGAIN
I AM THE GROOM AT A WEDDING THIS IS OUTRAGE-OUS!
NAME AND ADDRESS
YES! BARBARA AND I WERE SUPPOSED TO BE MARRIED TONIGHT!
WHY ARE YOU BACK HERE? WHAT HAPPENED TONIGHT?
IS THIS ABOUT BARBARA ?
THIS IS MY OWN AFFAIR! STAY OUT OF IT!
I KNOW I WARNED YOU LAST TIME I TOLD YOU TO CUT HER OFF OR SHE WOULD RUIN YOUR REPUTATION!
THAT WOMAN IS A NO-GOOD LIAR.
BARBARA? YOU'RE JOKING
I'M IN LOVE WITH BARBARA !!

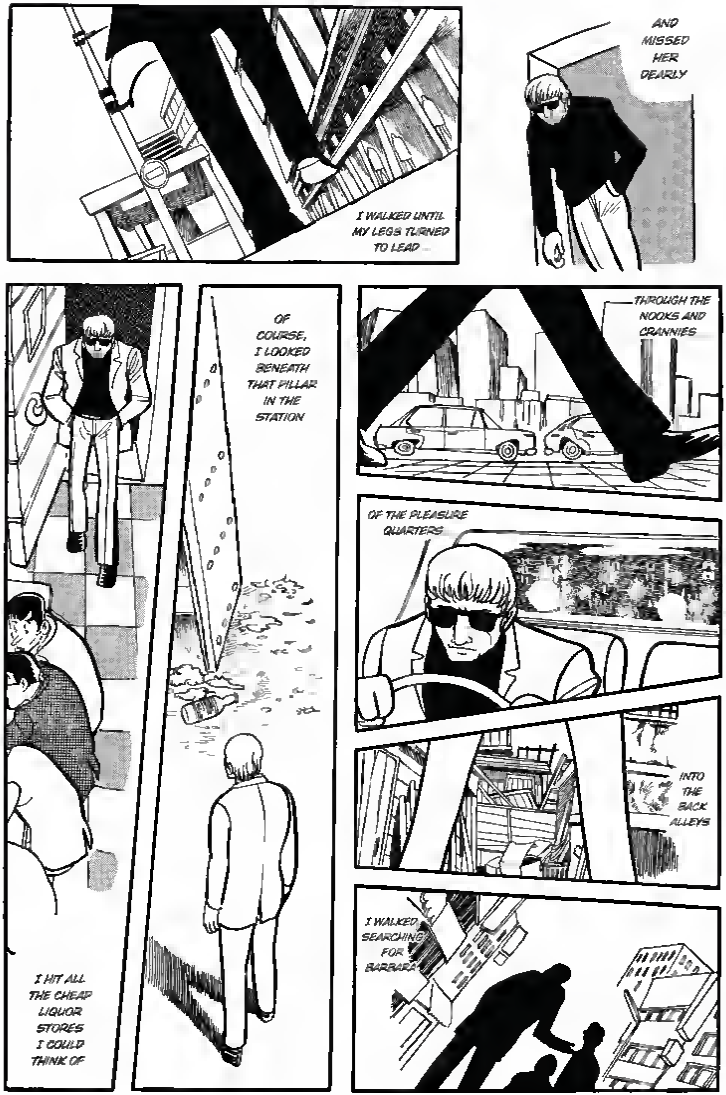
WE'RE ONLY HERE BECAUSE YOU COPS POKED YOUR NOSES IN! YOU HAD ABSOLUTELY NO REASON TO ARREST ME!
YET HERE WE ARE!
THEY CERTAINLY WON'T BE PLEASED THAT YOU TOOK PART IN A STRANGE CEREMONY ON DRUGS AT A DEN OF NUDISTS.
POLICE OFFICERS ARE NOT KNOWN FOR THEIR SOPHISTICATED MANNERS, ESPECIALLY WHERE DRUGS AND ORGIES ARE CONCERNED.
SENSEI, YOU KNOW I'M A FAN OF YOURS, BUT THE OTHER DETECTIVES WILL NOT BE SO CORDIAL.
HE GOT USED TO BEING FAMOUS AND GOT CAUGHT UP IN THIS... WHAT A SHAME.
LOOK OVER HERE- AND SMILE!
HEY, MIKURA-SENSEI!
SHE'S NOT ON THE LIST OF THOSE ARRESTED SHE MUST'VE ESCAPED
WHERE IS BARBARA?
PLEASE GO HOME FOR NOW. I WILL SUMMON YOU FOR QUESTIONING

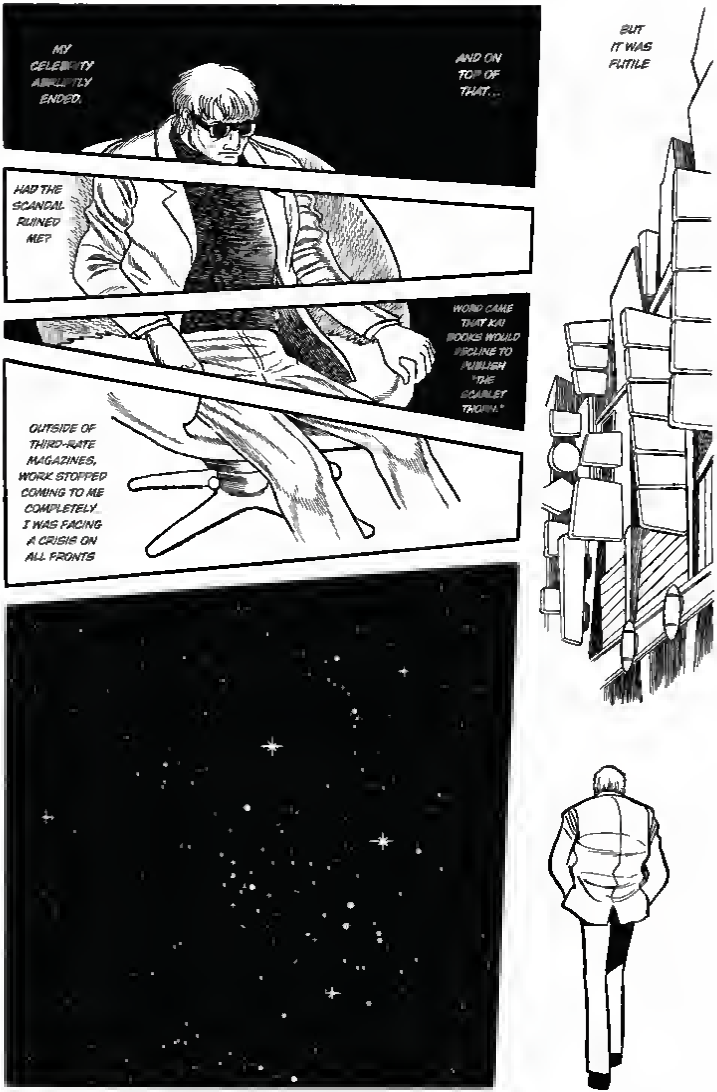
IT WAS MY MISTAKE TO TELL YOU, MR. KAI...
IT'S A BANNER HEADLINE IN ALL THE NEWSPAPERS!!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO LEAKED IT TO THE MEDIA, AND THEY SQUEALED TO THE POLICE!
BU-IT-
JAN. 30, 1974 MONDAY
FAMOUS WRITER CHARGED WITH INDECENCY
Took drugs nude, causing public disorder

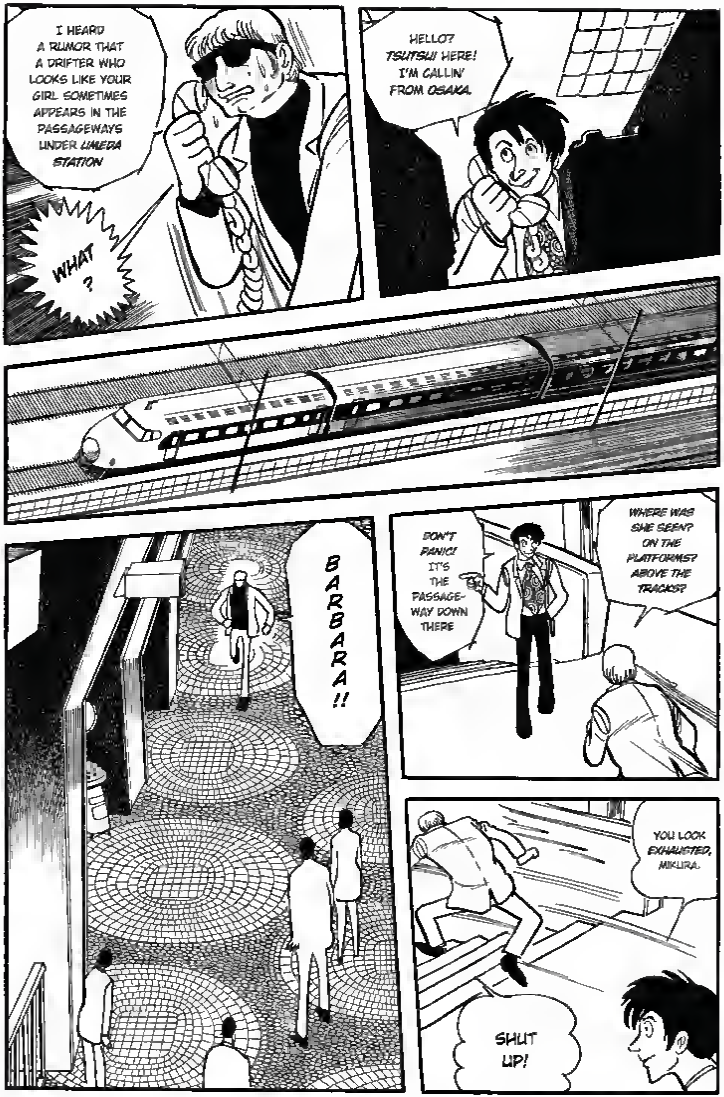

BE THAT AS IT MAY, TAKE SOME RESPONSIBILITY HERE, MR. KAI! DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH TROUBLE I'M IN?
YOU NEVER TOLD ME TO KEEP THIS A SECRET...
SAY WHAT YOU LIKE, BUT

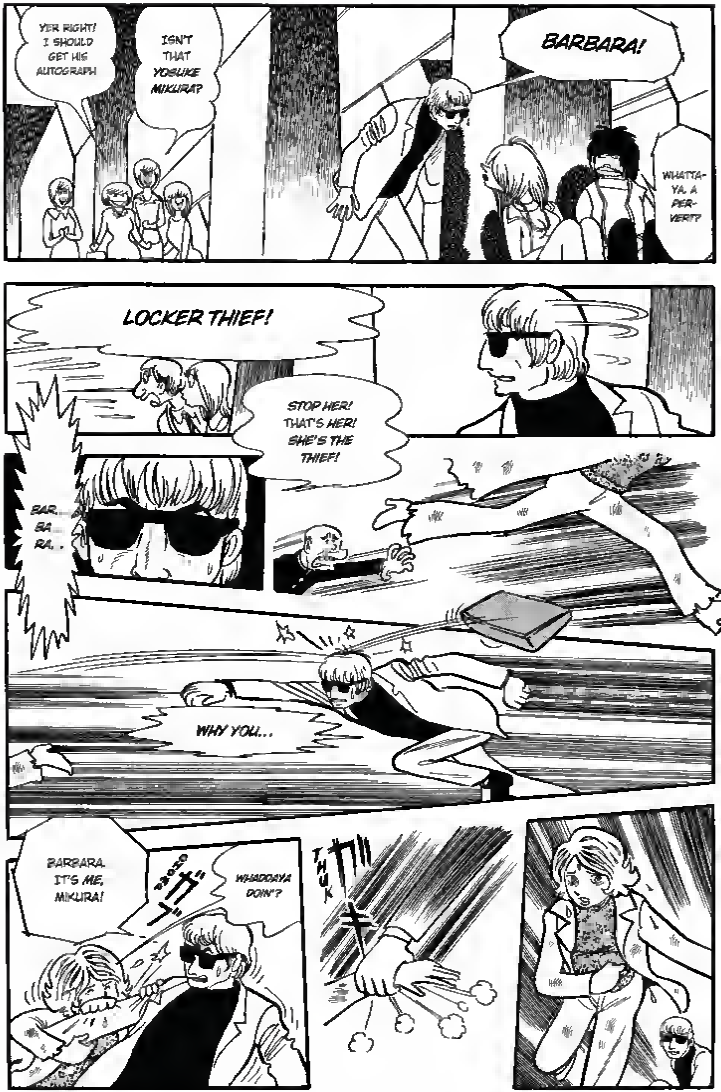

BARBARA...
SKIT / "H"
DAMN IT...!

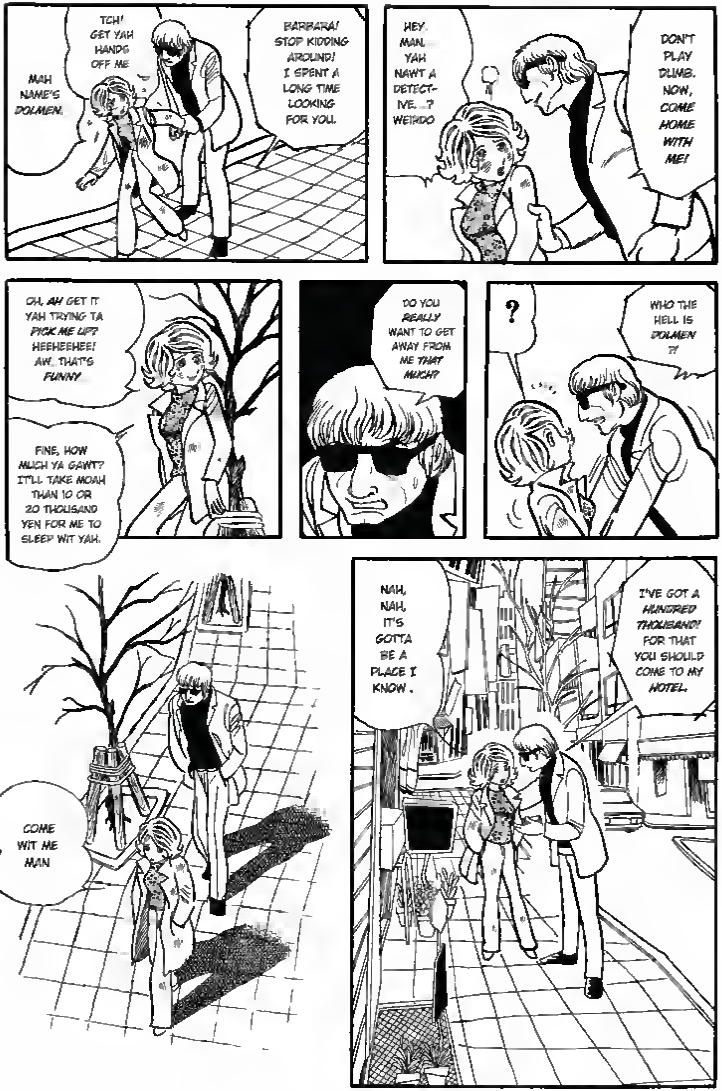

AT FIRST, I THOUGHT SHE WOULD COME BACK TO THE APARTMENT, LIKE A FORGOTTEN MEMORY SUDDENLY RECALLED, BUT...
BARBARA DISAPPEARED. MY ROOM WAS EMPTY...
EVEN AFTER THE FROST MELTED, AND THE WARM SPRING WIND BEGAN TO BLOW...
THERE WAS NOT A WORD FROM BARBARA. OF COURSE, NONE OF HER RELATIVES CAME BY. NOR DID ANYONE FROM THE SOCIETY OF THE GREAT MOTHER GODDESS.
I THOUGHT OF THAT SLOVENLY DRUNKARD...
I DRANK ALONE, THINKING OF HER AND FEELING SORRY FOR MYSELF...
THE CUPBOARD OF IMPORTED ALCOHOL THAT BARBARA USED TO OPEN AND DRINK WITHOUT ASKING...


I WALKED UNTIL MY LEGS TURNED TO LEAD
AND MISSED HER DEARLY
I HIT ALL THE CHEAP LIQUOR STORES I COULD THINK OF
OF COURSE, I LOOKED BENEATH THAT PILLAR IN THE STATION
YEN
THROUGH THE NOOKS AND CRANNIES
OF THE PLEASURE QUARTERS
INTO THE BACK ALLEYS
I WALKED SEARCHING FOR BARBARA


MY CELEBRITY ABRUPTLY ENDED.
AND ON TOP OF THAT...
HAD THE SCANDAL RUINED ME?
WORD CAME THAT KAI BOOKS WOULD WITHDRAW TO PUBLISH "THE BRAMBLE THORN."
OUTSIDE OF THIRD-RATE MAGAZINES, WORK STOPPED COMING TO ME COMPLETELY. I WAS FACING A CRISIS ON ALL FRONTS
BUT IT WAS FUTILE

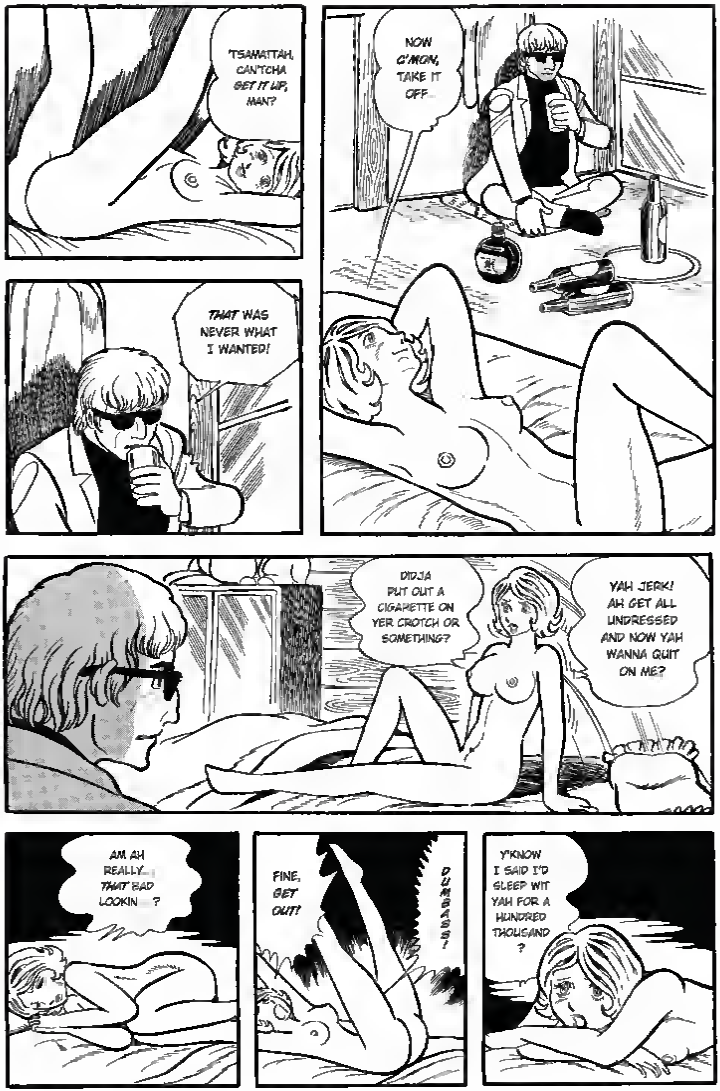

I HEARD A RUMOR THAT A DRIFTER WHO LOOKS LIKE YOUR GIRL SOMETIMES APPEARS IN THE PASSAGEWAYS UNDER UMEDA STATION
WHAT?
HELLO? TSUTSUI HERE! I'M CALLIN' FROM OSAKA.
BARBARA!!
DON'T PANIC! IT'S THE PASSAGE-WAY DOWN THERE
WHERE WAS SHE SEEN? ON THE PLATFORMS? ABOVE THE TRACKS?
YOU LOOK EXHAUSTED, MIKURA.
SHUT UP!


YER RIGHT! I SHOULD GET HIS AUTOGRAPH!
ISN'T THAT YOSUKE MIKURA?
BARBARA!
WHATTA-YA, A PER-VERT?
LOCKER THIEF!
STOP HER! THAT'S HER! SHE'S THE THIEF!
BAR... BA RA...
WHY YOU...
BARBARA, IT'S ME, MIKURA!
WHADDAYA DOIN'?
THUK


TCH! GET YAH HANDS OFF ME
MAH NAME'S DOLMEN.
BARBARA! STOP KIDDING AROUND! I SPENT A LONG TIME LOOKING FOR YOU.
HEY, MAN. YAH NAWT A DETECT-IVE...? WEIRDO
DON'T PLAY DUMB. NOW, COME HOME WITH ME!
OH, AH GET IT YAH TRYING TA PICK ME UP? HEEHEEHEE! AW, THAT'S FUNNY.
FINE, HOW MUCH YA GAWT? IT'LL TAKE MOAH THAN 10 OR 20 THOUSAND YEN FOR ME TO SLEEP WIT YAH.
DO YOU REALLY WANT TO GET AWAY FROM ME THAT MUCH?
?
WHO THE HELL IS DOLMEN ?
COME WIT ME MAN
NAH, NAH, IT'S GOTTA BE A PLACE I KNOW.
I'VE GOT A HUNDRED THOUSAND! FOR THAT YOU SHOULD COME TO MY HOTEL.

平
SO WHY YAH FOLLOWIN' ME AROUND ANYWAY?
YOU THERE, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE, ALWAYS IN TEARS?
YOU THEAH, WHAT DID YAH DO WIT YOUR YOUNG YEARS?
THAT'S VER-LAINE!
YOU *MUST* BE BARBARA AFTER ALL!
RAIN FALLS ON *MY HEART* AS IT FALLS ON THE *CITY* TUMP TIDDY TUMP TUMP...
BRING US *LOTSA* BOOZE!
I BROUGHT DIS *QUEER OLD GUY*.

DOWN THE HATCH, EH?
...
LET'S PARTY, THEN GO TO BED!
HEY, CHEER UP, YAH? WHO CARES IF I WASN'T THE RIGHT GIRL?
YOURS AND MINE, OF COURSE
WHOSE WEDDIN'?
ARE YOU ANGRY ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED AT THE WEDDING?
LOTSA PEOPLE LIKE POEMS, MAN.
BARBARA LIKED THE POETRY OF VERLAINE...
YER OUT OF IT, MAN. MUSTA JUST BEEN A GIRL WHO LOOKED LIKE ME.
DUNNO WHATCHER TALKIN' ABOUT.

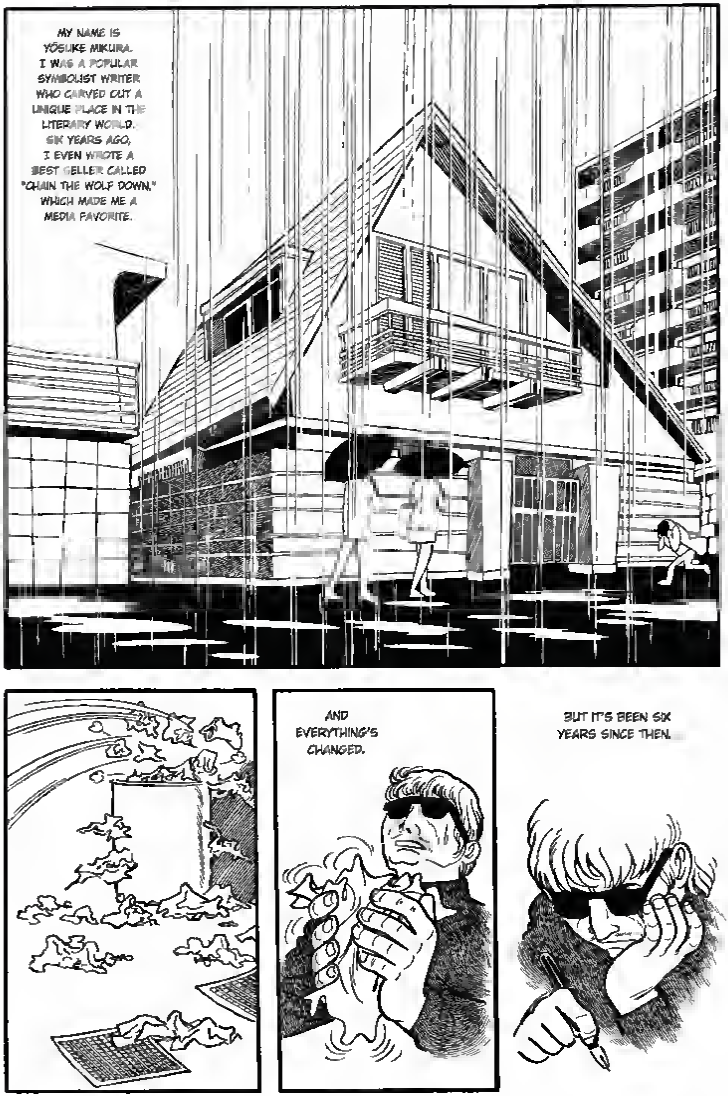

'TSAMATTAH, CAN'TCHA GET IT UP, MAN?
NOW C'MON, TAKE IT OFF...
THAT WAS NEVER WHAT I WANTED!
DIDJA PUT OUT A CIGARETTE ON YER CROTCH OR SOMETHING?
YAH JERK! AH GET ALL UNDRESSED AND NOW YAH WANNA QUIT ON ME?
AM AH REALLY... THAT BAD LOOKIN...?
FINE, GET OUT!
DUMBASS!
Y'KNOW I SAID I'D SLEEP WIT YAH FOR A HUNDRED THOUSAND?

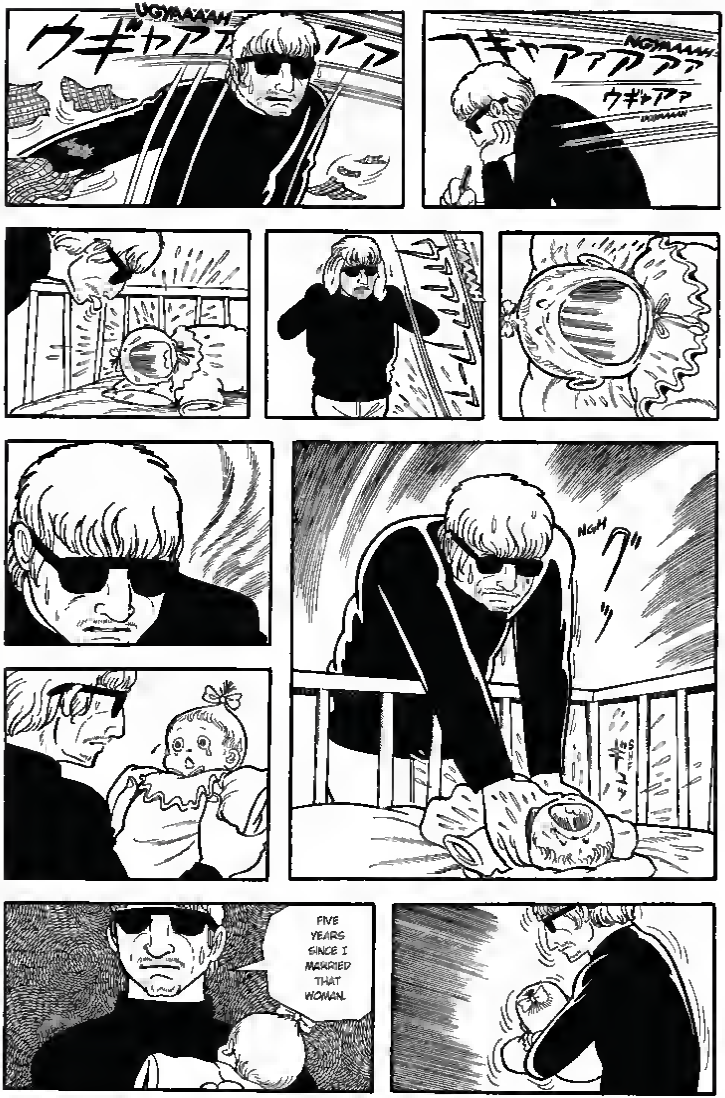
WHOA!
HEY MAN, WHATTAYA DOIN TOUCHIN' ANOTHER MAN'S GIRL?!
IT'S NO GOOD! THIS GUY AIN'T TOUCHED ME YET!
WHADDAYA MEAN? YAH GOT UNDRESSED!
THIS. THIS IS WHAT YOU WANTED WHEN YOU WENT OUT LOOKING FOR A GIRL?
YEAH I DID, BUT HE AIN'T DOIN' ANYTHIN'. IT'S TOTAL BULL...
HEY, MAN... YOU SLOW OR SOMETHING?
HE GAVE ME A HUNDRED THOUSAND!
A-A HUNDRED ?

SENSEI, I'VE BEEN READIN' YOUR BOOKS FOR A LONG TIME!
YOU BEEN ON TV, RIGHT? YOU'RE YÔSUKE MIKUIRA!
THAT'S IT!
HMM... I KNOW I'VE SEEN YOUR FACE SOMEWHERE BEFORE...
NO, THANK YOU!
HEY, LET'S TALK!
DAMN' HERE, LET ME POUR YOU A DRINK
WHERE ?
BUT WHERE DID SHE GO?
SHE'S NOT BARBARA AFTER ALL. THAT'S WHAT I HAVE TO BELIEVE
JUST HOLD ON A MINUTE DOLMEN, WON'T YOU GIVE HIM YOUR SPECIAL SERVICE?

Barbara ばるばら

CHAPTER TWELVE:
RETURN


MY NAME IS YŌSUKE MIKURA. I WAS A POPULAR SYMBOLIST WRITER WHO CARVED OUT A UNIQUE PLACE IN THE LITERARY WORLD. SIX YEARS AGO, I EVEN WROTE A BEST SELLER CALLED "CHAIN THE WOLF DOWN," WHICH MADE ME A MEDIA FAVORITE.
AND EVERYTHING'S CHANGED.
BUT IT'S BEEN SIX YEARS SINCE THEN.


UGYAAAAH
ウギャアアアアア
NGYAAAH
ウギャアアアア
NGH
FIVE YEARS SINCE I MARRIED THAT WOMAN.

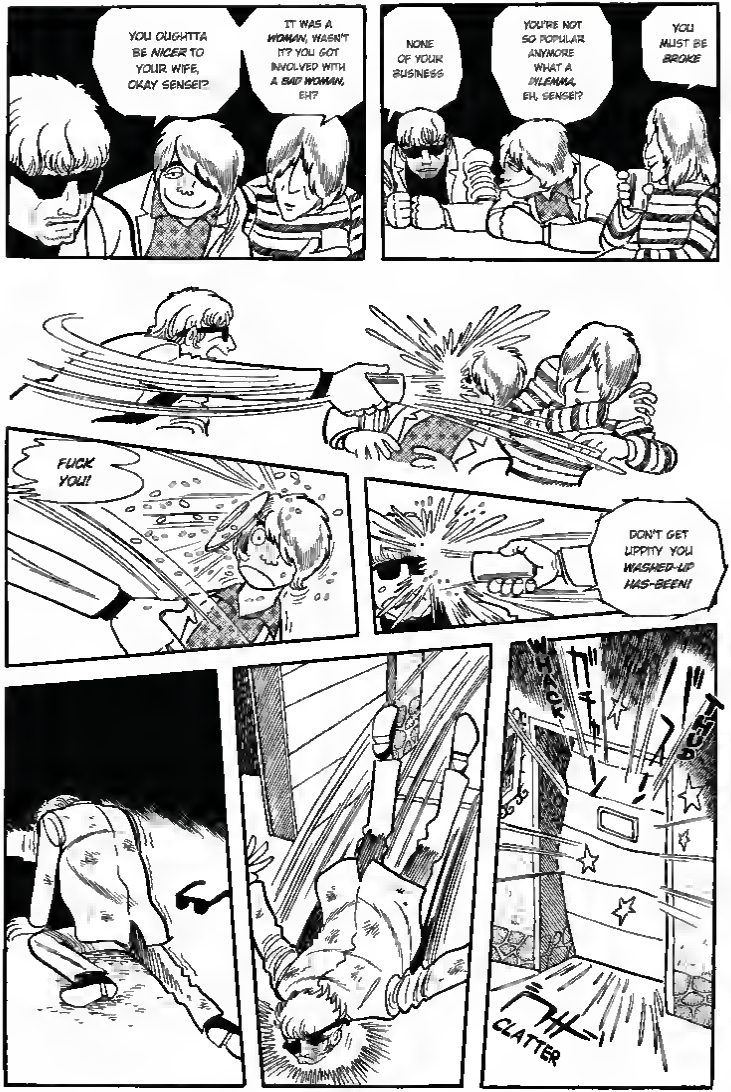
HER NAME IS SHIKAKO SATOMI... NO, NOW SHE'S SHIKAKO MIKURA
オギャア
"WOLF" IS GOING TO BE REPRINTED AGAIN, ABOUT 3,000 COPIES. IT'S THE ROYALTIES FROM THAT
IT WAS GOOD OF OLD KAI TO LEND IT TO US
I BROUGHT THE MONEY

YOU DON'T EVEN MAKE ENOUGH TO PAY THE UTILITIES ON TIME!
THE WATER AND ELECTRICITY BILLS ARE PILING UP!
HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT?
GIVE ME SOME OF IT I'M GOING FOR A DRINK
YOU HORRIBLE WOMAN!
THAT EXCUSE WON'T WORK ON ME ANYMORE
OH NO, YOU'RE NOT DOING THAT
IF I GET OUT AND SEE PEOPLE, IT'LL BE GOOD MATERIAL...
BACK THEN MY NAME STILL SOLD BOOKS IF IT'D GONE ON LIKE THAT I COULD'VE KEPT WRITING...
BUT INSTEAD YOU TRIED TO ROPE ME INTO POLITICS AND I COULDN'T FIND TIME TO WRITE!
WELL PARDON ME! YOU'RE THE ONE WHO ASKED ME TO MARRY YOU RIGHT AWAY WHEN I WENT TO YOUR APARTMENT
IF ONLY MY WEDDING TO BARBARA HAD WORKED OUT...

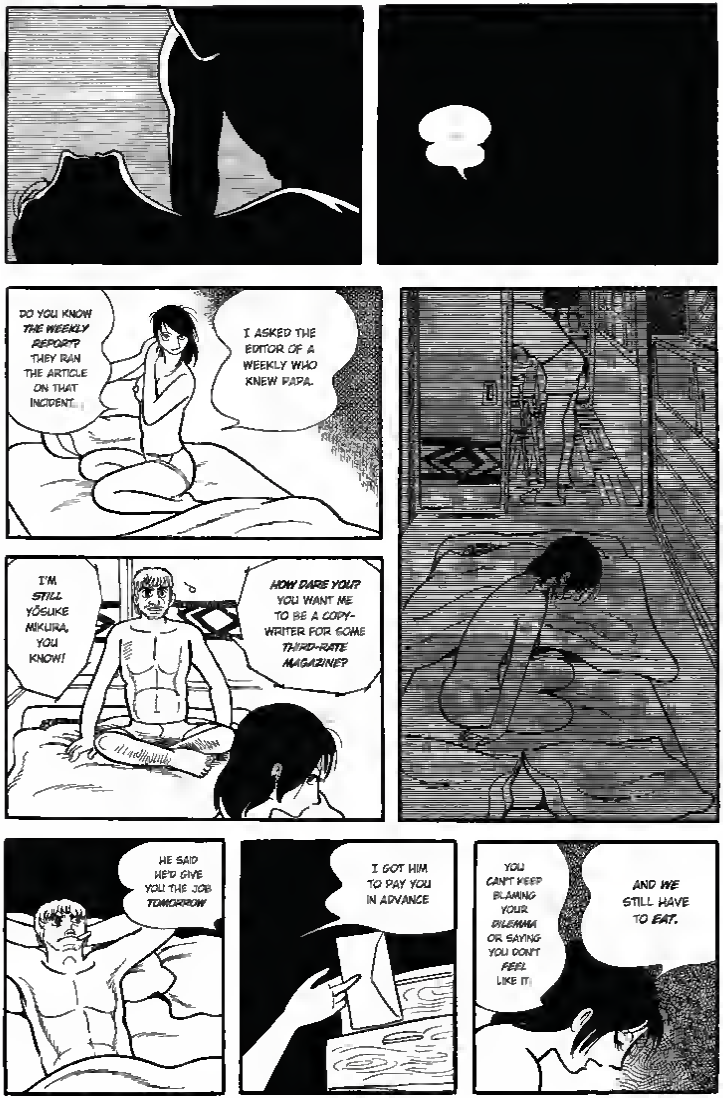
THAT'S RIGHT.
ALL YOU COULD THINK ABOUT WAS PUSHING ME INTO THE ELECTION AS A CELEBRITY CANDIDATE
YOUR HEART IS STILL IN YOUR FATHER'S WORLD.
ギャアーー
GYAAAH
ウギャ
NOYAAH
AND WHEN A WRITER'S SALES SLOW TO A TRICKLE IT'S BACK TO SQUARE ONE!
BUT YOU THREW THAT CHANCE AWAY!
IF YOU'D BECOME A POLITICIAN YOU WOULD'VE BEEN RESPECTED YOUR WHOLE LIFE AND YOU WOULD'VE BEEN FINANCIALLY SECURE TOO!
...
YOU DIDN'T EVEN CHANGE THE BABY'S DIAPER, DID YOU?
SHUT YOUR MOUTH!
GWAAAAH!!
ウキャアアアアアア

SO EVEN YOU'VE HAD SOME BAD LUCK... WHEN WAS IT YOU TOLD ME YOU HAD A REAL PICASSO?
YEAH, I *DONATED* IT TO THE *MUSEUM!*
SENSEI, I'M AFRAID I CAN'T GET ANYTHING FOR THESE
A *LITTLE* IS FINE
I CAN'T BRING MYSELF TO WRITE
WRITE ANOTHER HIT! *"WOLF"* SOLD REAL WELL.
HEH HEH HEH...
NOVELS! WHY BOTHER? TWENTIETH-CENTURY NOVELS ARE ALL *MASS-MEDIA DISPOSABLE PRODUCTS.*

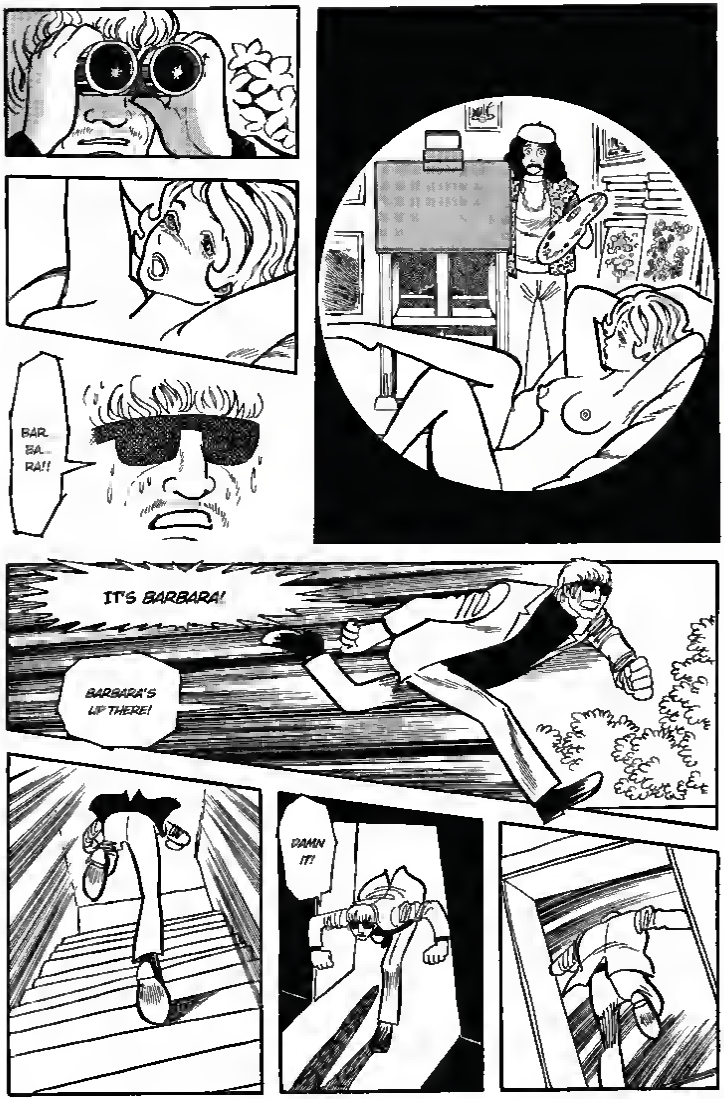
GIMME THE USUAL.
HEY THERE
YO!
HEY, I'VE SEEN YOU SOMEWHERE... WAIT A MINUTE!
WHEN EVEN THE DEVIL'S GIVEN UP ON YOU, IT'S ALL OVER, KID.
PRICES GOING UP, SAKE'S GOING UP, BILLS ARE GOING UP... HOOEE! DAMN IT. THE DEVIL OUGHTTA COME AND GOBBLE UP THIS WORLD.
SOME-THING WRONG WITH THAT?
RIGHT! YOU'RE MIKURA, THE WRITER! HA HA HA! MIKURA'S HERE!


YOU OUGHTTA BE NICER TO YOUR WIFE, OKAY SENSEI?
IT WAS A WOMAN, WASN'T IT? YOU GOT INVOLVED WITH A BAD WOMAN, EH?
NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS
YOU'RE NOT SO POPULAR ANYMORE WHAT A DILEMMA, EH, SENSEI?
YOU MUST BE BROKE
FUCK YOU!!
DON'T GET UPPITY YOU WASHED-UP HAS-BEEN!
CLATTER

BARBARA
AFTER FIVE YEARS OF TRYING, I HEADED TO THAT PILLAR IN THE STATION ONE MORE TIME
THIS IS HOW LOW I'VE SUNK.
FIGHTING WITH DRUNKS
YŌSUKE MIKURA IS GONE..
SNHKKK
SNOORRE
YOU'RE HIS WIFE? HERE IS YOUR HUSBAND, MA'AM.
Z
SNOORRE
SNOORRE


DO YOU KNOW THE WEEKLY REPORT? THEY RAN THE ARTICLE ON THAT INCIDENT.
I ASKED THE EDITOR OF A WEEKLY WHO KNEW PAPA.
I'M STILL YŌSUKE MIKURA, YOU KNOW!
HOW DARE YOU? YOU WANT ME TO BE A COPY-WRITER FOR SOME THIRD-RATE MAGAZINE?
HE SAID HE'D GIVE YOU THE JOB TOMORROW
I GOT HIM TO PAY YOU IN ADVANCE
YOU CAN'T KEEP BLAMING YOUR DILEMMA OR SAYING YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE IT!
AND WE STILL HAVE TO EAT.

A JOB, IS IT? THAT SOUNDS DIFFICULT...
HOW ABOUT THAT... I'M SO SORRY TO BOTHER YOU, BUT COULD I HAVE YOUR AUTOGRAPH?
WELL, IF IT ISN'T MR. YŌSUKE MIKURA!
TSK... A PEEPING ARTICLE, REALLY?


BAR.
BA..
RA!!
IT'S BARBARA!
BARBARA'S UP THERE!
DAMN IT!

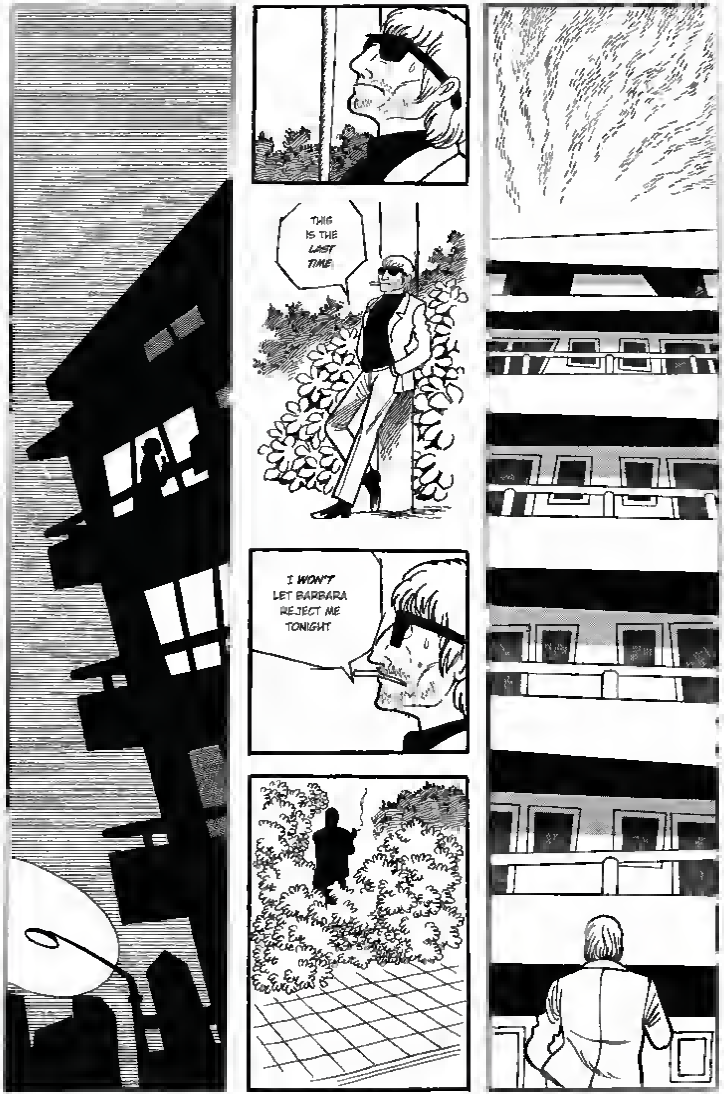
BARBARA? NO ONE OF THAT NAME HERE.
BARBARA IS IN YOUR APARTMENT, ISN'T SHE?
CAN I HELP YOU?
ZZZ
AH MET YOU BEFORE, IN OSAKA!
SINCE I FOUND YOU IN OSAKA, I COULDN'T KEEP BELIEVING YOU WERE SOMEONE ELSE!
PLEASE, COME WITH ME.
MISTER, MAH NAME IS DOLMEN!
FOR SOME REASON, SHE JUST STARTED LIVING WITH ME ONE DAY.
SHE'S QUITE A BURDEN.
A LADY, DRUNK GIRL SHE'S IN THERE, ISN'T SHE?
DO YOU MEAN DOLMEN? SHE'S A WANDERER AND A DELINQUENT.
BAR-BARA!
EXCUSE ME!
LISTEN, OLD MAN - AH DON'T KNOW YAH, AH DON'T KNOW YAH, AH DON'T KNOW YAH!
THAT POLICE RAID THE NIGHT OF OUR WEDDING WAS MY FAULT. I'M SORRY.
I'VE LOOKED FOR YOU FOR YEARS SINCE THEN!

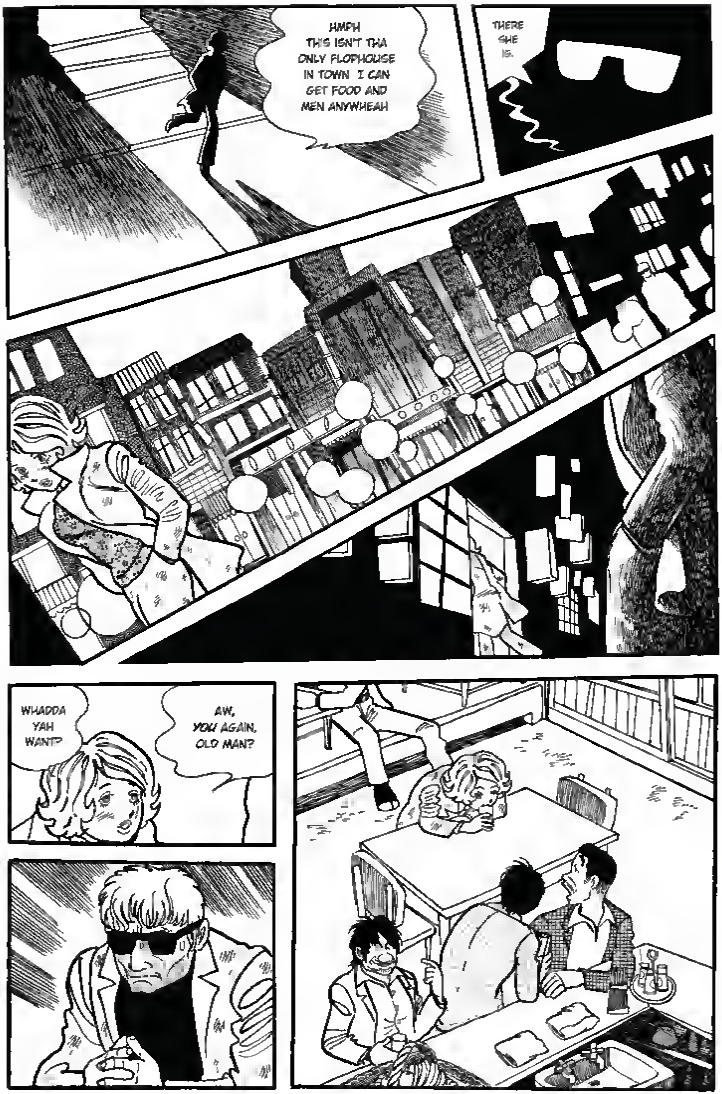
DONCHA HAVE A WIFE AND A KID, OLD MAN?
CLICK
THAT'S RIGHT
I'M SORRY, ARE YOU A FRIEND OF DOLMEN'S?
HE ONLY REALIZED HOW VALUABLE BARBARA WAS AFTER SHE'D LEFT HIS SIDE
I REMEMBERED WHAT ILISSALKA SAID TO ME BEFORE HE DIED.
JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!
I HAVEN'T WRITTEN ANYTHING GOOD SINCE YOU LEFT! I'VE EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT HANGING UP MY PEN!
PLEASE, COME BACK TO ME!
BARBARA, I CAN'T WRITE WITHOUT YOU!

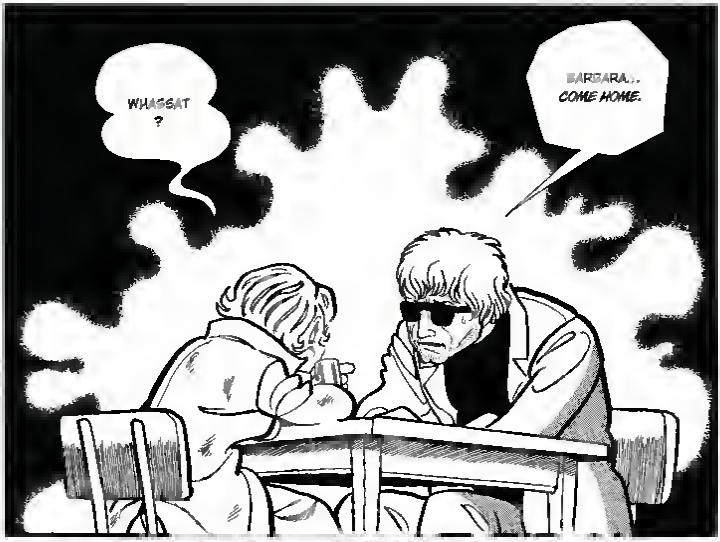
WHEN SHE JUST SHOWED UP AND KEPT FOLLOWING ME SHE SAID SHE CAME FROM OSAKA, GOT OFF AT SHINAGAWA... AND STARTED WANDERING
THAT'S RIGHT WHEN WAS IT? I WAS SKETCHING THE TAMA RIVER NEAR ROKUGO.
AND SHE SEEMED LIKE AN INTERESTING GIRL SO I TOOK HER HOME AND HAD HER MODEL FOR ME. BUT SHE JUST KEPT TAKING MY MONEY AND DRINKING MY WINE...
SHE'D READ THE POETRY OF VERLAINE
SO IF YOU WANT TO TAKE HER HOME WITH YOU, I WON'T GET IN YOUR WAY
YOU ARE LUCKY... I PRAY THAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO CREATE GOOD WORK.
WHAT A STRANGE MAN
NO. I'M SORRY I GOT EXCITED... GOODBYE...

LUCK WILL COME TO THE ARTIST BARBARA IS WITH . BUT IF BARBARA ABANDONS AN ARTIST IT IS OVER FOR HIM
BARBARA CHANGES MASTERS CAPRICIOUSLY
DEAR, YOU HAVEN'T STARTED ON YOUR ARTICLE
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT?
IT'S THAT WOMAN, ISN'T IT?
QUIET !
I'M RIGHT, AREN'T I? IT'S WRITTEN ON YOUR FACE.
YOU MET HER AGAIN SOMEWHERE DIDN'T YOU? WHAT WAS HER NAME? BARBARA?

BE QUIET!
YOU'RE A GROWN MAN, WITH A CHILD! DO YOU HAVE NO SHAME?
I'LL NEVER LET YOU GO SEE THAT GOOD-FOR-NOTHING GIRL!
I'VE PUT MY HOPE IN YOU FOR FIVE LONG YEARS.
NO, YOU WON'T.
I'LL LEAVE YOU.
YOU'LL HAVE TO PAY BACK THE PRINCIPAL!
YOU EVEN USED IT FOR THE MORTGAGE ON THIS HOUSE!
AND YOU'VE USED UP ALL THE MONEY I INHERITED FROM PAPA TO PUT YOU UP FOR ELECTION.
YŌSUKE!
WHEN YOU'RE RID OF ME, I WON'T BE USING ANY MORE OF YOUR HONEY.
SO THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT, DON'T.


THIS IS THE LAST TIME!
I WON'T LET BARBARA REJECT ME TONIGHT


HMPH THIS ISN'T THA ONLY FLOPHOUSE IN TOWN I CAN GET FOOD AND MEN ANYWHEAH
THERE SHE IS.
WHADDA YAH WANT?
AW, YOU AGAIN, OLD MAN?

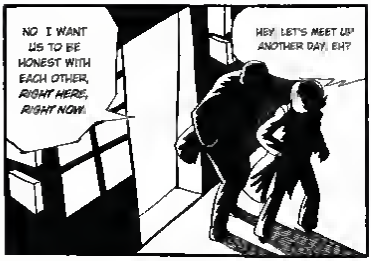

WHAGSAT ?
BARBARA... COME HOME.

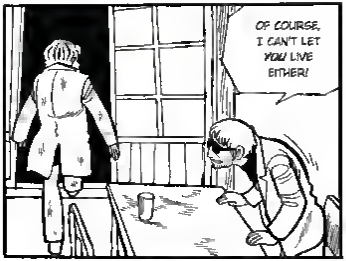
SHUT UP! THIS GIRL IS A WITCH!

HEY! NO USE HITTING ON A DRUNK BUM LIKE HER!

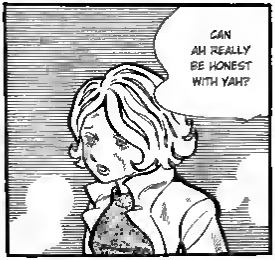
IT'LL DESTROY ME.
JUST NOW, I LEFT MY WIFE TO COME HERE IF I CAN'T BE WITH YOU, IT'LL...

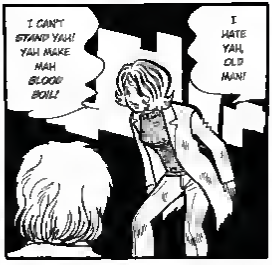
YOU'RE SPOILIN' MAH DRINK.
YOU'RE PRETTY STUBBORN, OLD MAN

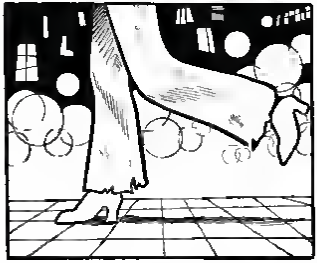

NO I WANT US TO BE HONEST WITH EACH OTHER, RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW.
HEY, LET'S MEET UP ANOTHER DAY, EH?

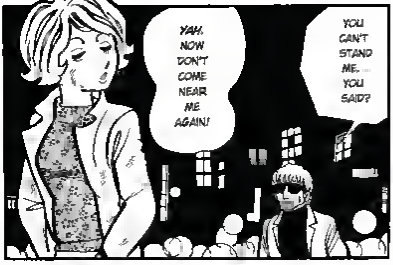

OF COURSE, I CAN'T LET YOU LIVE EITHER!

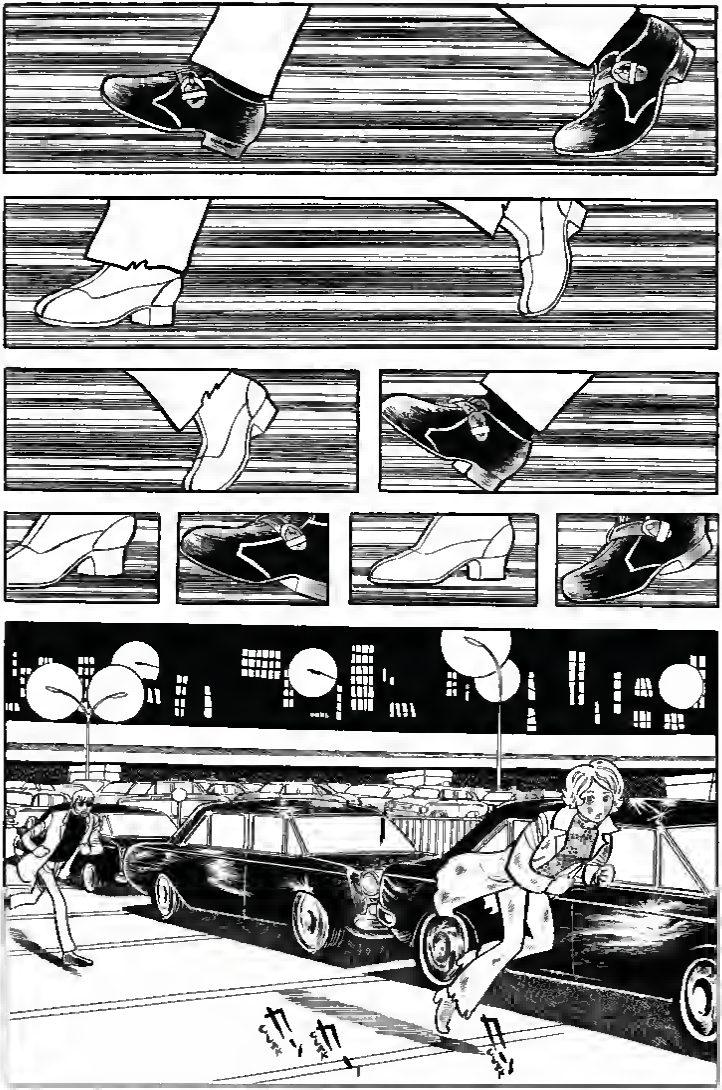
AND MAH NAME'S NOT BARBARA, IT'S DOLMEN!
CAN YAH PAY THAT MUCH NOW? ...YER A MIDDLE-AGED MAN WITH NO MONEY SO WHY'M I SUPPOSED TO LIKE YAH?
BEFORE, YAH PAID 100,000 YEN FOR ME!


CAN AH REALLY BE HONEST WITH YAH?

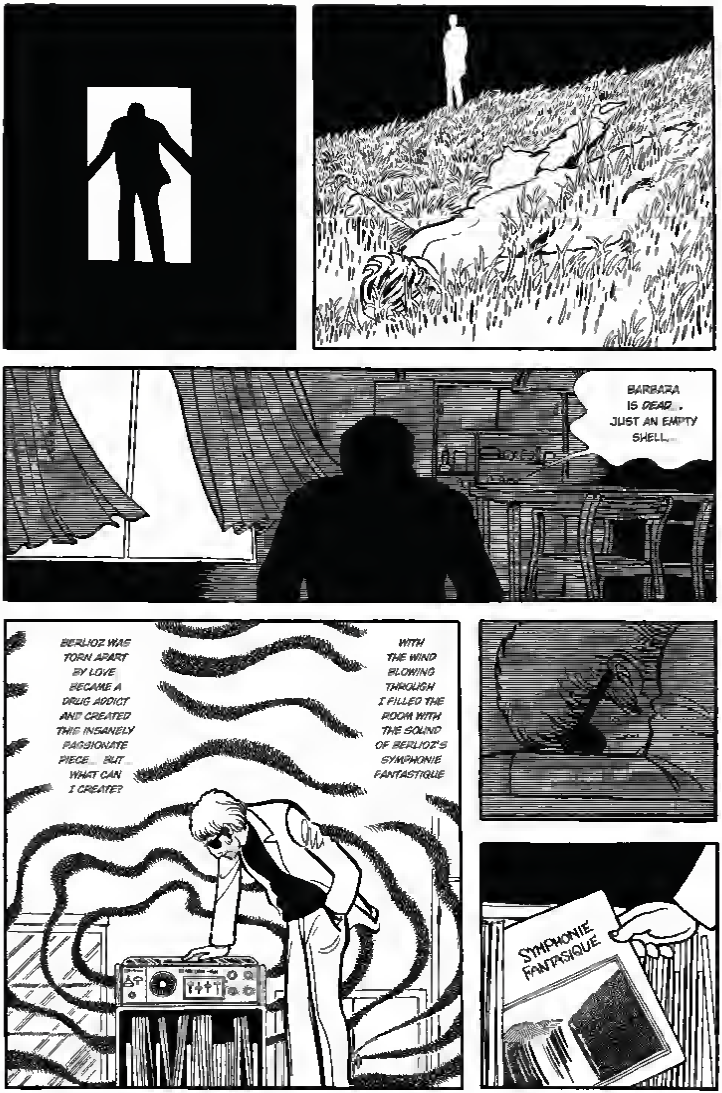

I CAN'T STAND YAH! YAH MAKE MAH BLOOD BOIL!
I HATE YAH, OLD MAN!

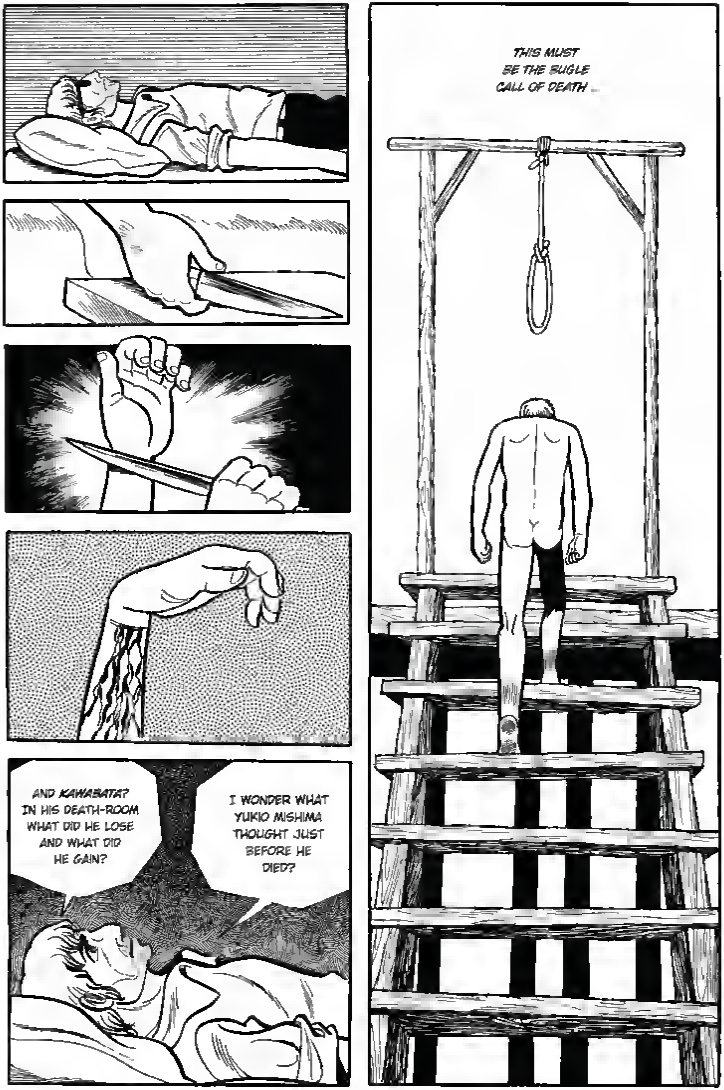


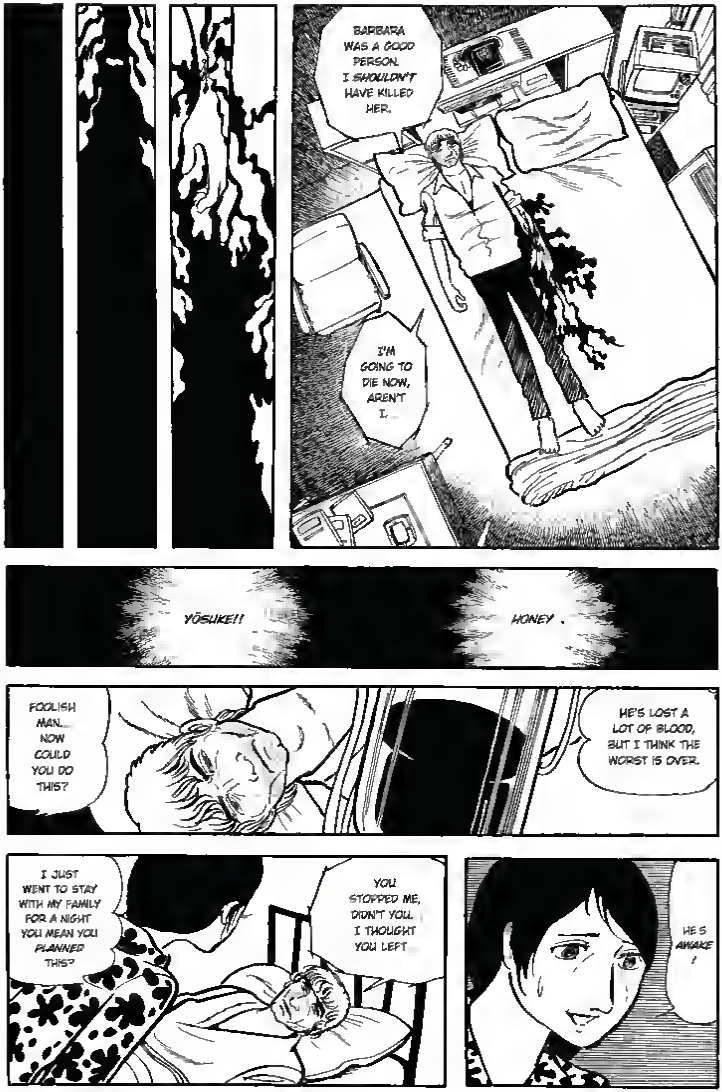

YAH, NOW DON'T COME NEAR ME AGAIN!
YOU CAN'T STAND ME... YOU SAID?



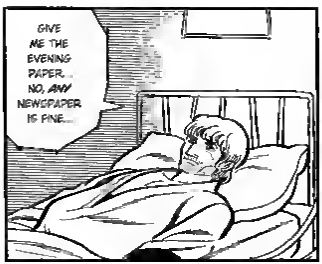
MUR...DER...ER...
STOP IT, ASSHOLE!
S-STOP-AK. .
UK... UKK...


BARBARA IS DEAD... JUST AN EMPTY SHELL...
BERLIOZ WAS TORN APART BY LOVE BECAME A DRUG ADDICT AND CREATED THIS INSANELY PASSIONATE PIECE... BUT... WHAT CAN I CREATE?
WITH THE WIND BLOWING THROUGH I FILLED THE ROOM WITH THE SOUND OF BERLIOZ'S SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE
SYMPHONIE FANTASIQUE


THIS MUST BE THE BUGLE CALL OF DEATH...
I WONDER WHAT YUKIO MISHIMA THOUGHT JUST BEFORE HE DIED?
AND KAWABATA? IN HIS DEATH-ROOM WHAT DID HE LOSE AND WHAT DID HE GAIN?

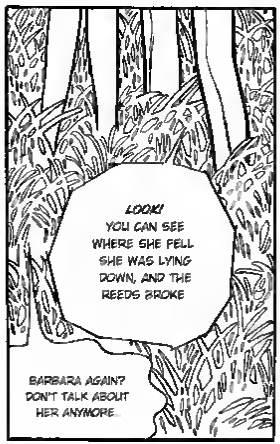

BARBARA WAS A GOOD PERSON. I SHOULDN'T HAVE KILLED HER.
I'M GOING TO DIE NOW, AREN'T I.
YÔSUKE!!
HONEY.
FOOLISH MAN... HOW COULD YOU DO THIS?
HE'S LOST A LOT OF BLOOD, BUT I THINK THE WORST IS OVER.
I JUST WENT TO STAY WITH MY FAMILY FOR A NIGHT YOU MEAN YOU PLANNED THIS?
YOU STOPPED ME, DIDN'T YOU. I THOUGHT YOU LEFT.
HE'S AWAKE!

WHO ?
THERE SHOULD BE SOMETHING ABOUT AN UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN FOUND STRANGLED TO DEATH...


GIVE ME THE EVENING PAPER... NO, ANY NEWSPAPER IS FINE...

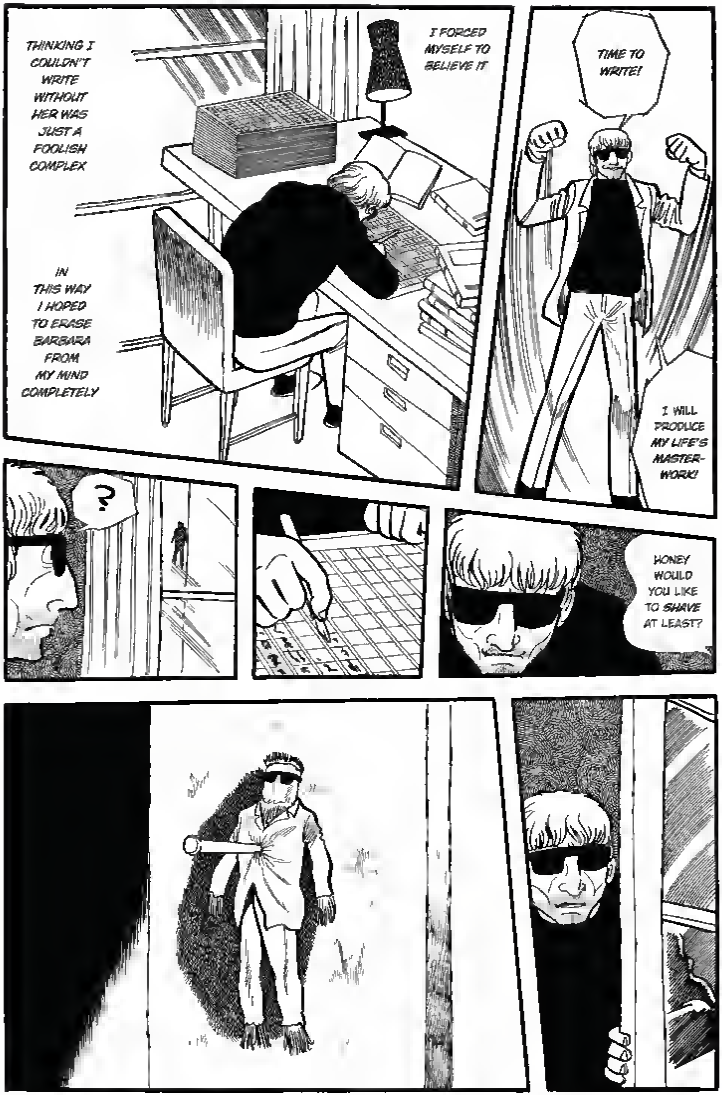
DAMN IT... WHY WASN'T IT IN THE PAPER?
SOMEONE MUST HAVE CARRIED BARBARA'S BODY AWAY
YŌSUKE! DON'T GET EXCITED

THIS CAN'T BE IT WAS ON THE ROAD, SO SHE SHOULD'VE BEEN FOUND RIGHT AWAY!
THERE'S NOTHING!
NOTHING !


LOOK! YOU CAN SEE WHERE SHE FELL SHE WAS LYING DOWN, AND THE REEDS BROKE
BARBARA AGAIN? DON'T TALK ABOUT HER ANYMORE...

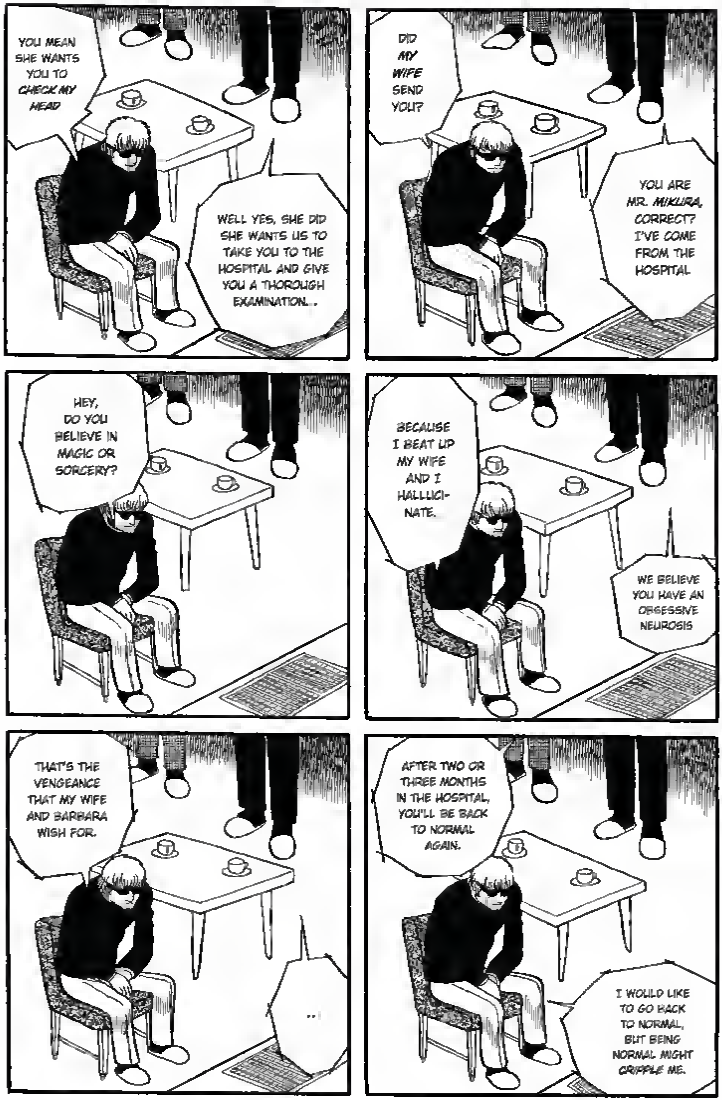
THIS IS WHERE I STRANGLED HER...
WHAT ?

TO WORK? HOW WILL THAT HELP ME?
WHAT DID YOUR FAMILY TELL YOU?
I WON'T COMPLAIN ABOUT YOUR WORK AGAIN I'M GOING TO GET A JOB TOO!
LET'S GET A FRESH START
I WENT TOO FAR MYSELF
ONCE YOU MAKE YOUR COMEBACK...
SO I'LL BE THE HOUSE-HUSBAND OF A HAIR-DRESSER?
I WON'T BURDEN YOU
SO DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE EVERYDAY THINGS...
I WANT YOU TO ENJOY YOUR WORK AGAIN!
I'LL SHOW YOU I CAN WRITE JUST AS WELL WITHOUT YOU!
BAR-BARA? HMPH.
WASN'T I ALREADY A BIG SUCCESS?
EVEN BEFORE I MET HER...
BARBARA, MY MUSE? RIDICULOUS.
I'M SURE OF IT THIS TIME
I BET KAI BOOKS WILL EVEN PUBLISH "THE SCARLET THORN" FOR YOU!
PEOPLE WILL APPRECIATE YOU AGAIN
I KNOW YOU JUST WANT ME TO MAKE MY COMEBACK SO YOU CAN PULL ME INTO POLITICS AGAIN...
HA HA HA HA... WHAT AN OPTIMIST


THINKING I COULDN'T WRITE WITHOUT HER WAS JUST A FOOLISH COMPLEX
I FORCED MYSELF TO BELIEVE IT
IN THIS WAY I HOPED TO ERASE BARBARA FROM MY MIND COMPLETELY
TIME TO WRITE!
I WILL PRODUCE MY LIFE'S MASTER-WORK!
?
HONEY WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHAVE AT LEAST?

HEY!! SHIKAKO!!
THAT DOLL...
THEN DID SOMEONE CLIMB UP THIS VERANDA?
WHAT IS IT?
WHY DID YOU PIN THIS UP?
DON'T SAY SUCH STUPID THINGS DO YOU WANT TO GET US ALL INTO TROUBLE AGAIN?
AN OMEN OF DEATH ..
THE CURSE ...
OF COURSE IS IT REVENGE ?!
BECAUSE I KILLED BARBARA...
IF YOU DO, WHY NOT TELL THE POLICE?
YOU KNOW I KILLED BARBARA?
WHO ARE YOU?! WHERE ARE YOU?!

THE DOLLS BEGAN FOLLOWING ME EVERY-WHERE
SINCE THAT DAY WHEN I WAS CURSED ...
ONE CAME IN A PACKAGE THROWN INTO THE MAILBOX.
I EVEN FOUND ONE UNDER THE BED
WAIT!
NO!
YOU FAILED IN GROOMING ME, SO NOW YOU'RE TIRED OF ME!
I'VE HAD ENOUGH!
YOU MUST BE JOKING!
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO GETS CLOSE TO ME!
IT ISN'T ME! WHY WOULD I WANT TO UPSET YOU LIKE THAT?

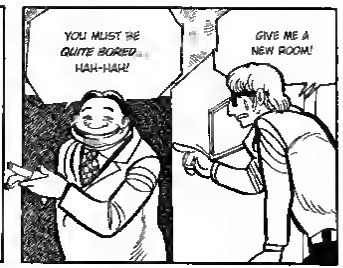

YOU MEAN SHE WANTS YOU TO CHECK MY HEAD
WELL YES, SHE DID SHE WANTS US TO TAKE YOU TO THE HOSPITAL AND GIVE YOU A THOROUGH EXAMINATION...
DID MY WIFE SEND YOU!?
YOU ARE MR. MIKURA, CORRECT? I'VE COME FROM THE HOSPITAL
HEY, DO YOU BELIEVE IN MAGIC OR SORCERY?
BECAUSE I BEAT UP MY WIFE AND I HALLUCINATE.
WE BELIEVE YOU HAVE AN OBSESSIVE NEUROSIS
THAT'S THE VENGEANCE THAT MY WIFE AND BARBARA WISH FOR.
..
AFTER TWO OR THREE MONTHS IN THE HOSPITAL, YOU'LL BE BACK TO NORMAL AGAIN.
I WOULD LIKE TO GO BACK TO NORMAL, BUT BEING NORMAL MIGHT CRIPPLE ME.

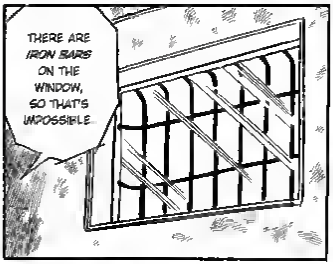
I WONDER IF ANYONE IN THE WORLD CAN SEE THE EXTENT OF HIS OWN INSANITY?
FOR A LONG TIME, I THOUGHT I WAS A DEVIANT.
ヴヴヴヴ
Vrrr
IF I TOLD YOU I KILLED HIS MODEL... WOULD YOU BELIEVE ME? HEH HEH HEH HEH...
FOR EXAMPLE, THERE IS A PAINTER LIVING IN THAT BUILDING
IT'S BARBARA!
SHE'S ALIVE!!
BARBARA IS-!

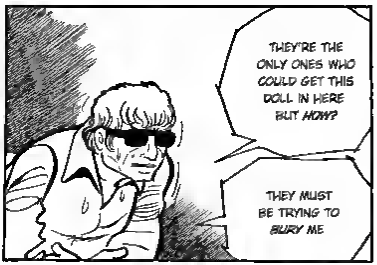
YOU MAY NOT
LET ME SEE BARBARA
STOP THE CAR!
WAIT, NO! GET TO THE HOSPITAL RIGHT AWAY!
I KNOW I KILLED HER! IF SHE'S ALIVE NOW IT'S BECAUSE SHE'S A WITCH. YOU'LL SEE WHEN YOU MEET HER!
WE BELIEVE HE SUFFERS FROM INTENSE SCHIZOPHRENIA
EVEN THE PATIENT HIMSELF SAYS HE WISHES TO BE ISOLATED

PLEASE HELP ME!! IT'S A CURSED DOLL!! I'M GOING TO DIE!
WAAGH!
OH, THIS...
LOOK... THIS CURSED DOLL GOT IN HERE SOMEHOW
LET ME SEE...
IS THERE A HIDDEN ENTRANCE TO THIS ROOM, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

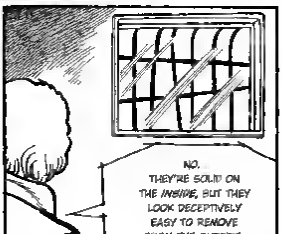
HE DOESN'T BELIEVE ME...


YOU MUST BE QUITE BORED... HAH-HAH!
GIVE ME A NEW ROOM!


THERE ARE IRON BARS ON THE WINDOW, SO THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.


THEY'RE THE ONLY ONES WHO COULD GET THIS DOLL IN HERE BUT HOW?
THEY MUST BE TRYING TO BURY ME

CREEEE

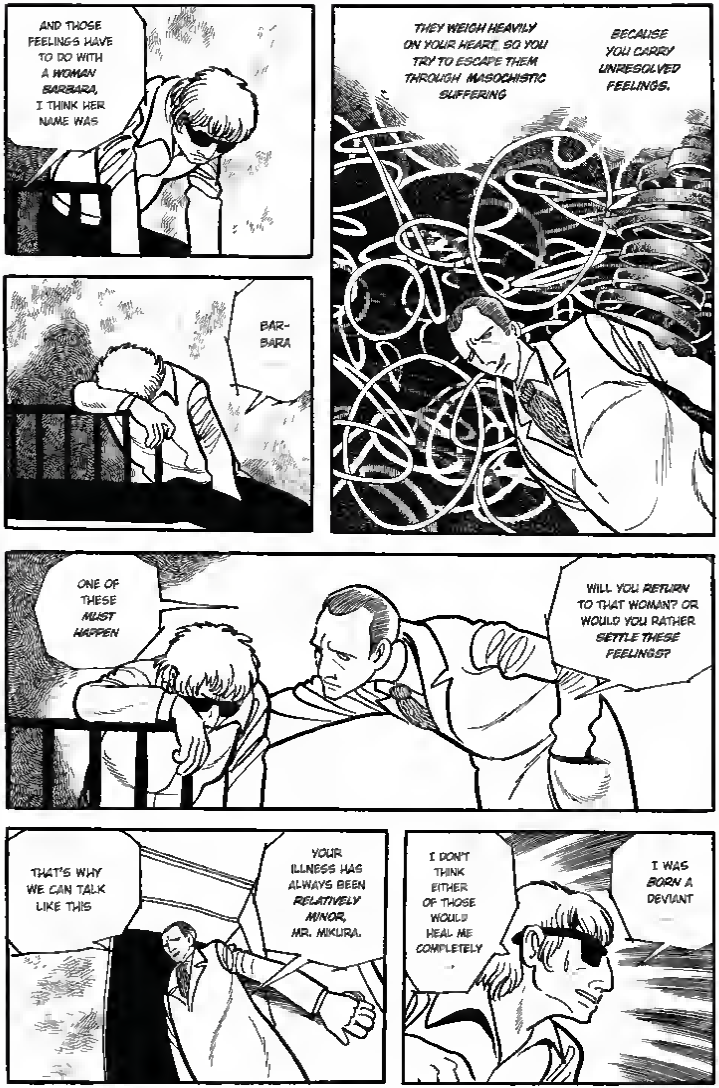

NO. THEY'RE SOLID ON THE INSIDE, BUT THEY LOOK DECEPTIVELY EASY TO REMOVE FROM THE OUTSIDE.

FROM HERE I WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT A SURPRISE ATTACK.

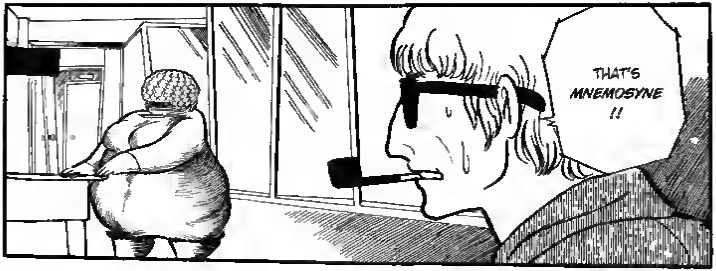
...CRIK CRIK
...ギギ
CREEEKK
ギーギギ
CLAK CRASH
ガチャ!
VOODOO MINION!
JUST TRY TO COME NEAR ME NOW... I'LL STAB YOU FULL OF HOLES AND THROW YOU OUT!

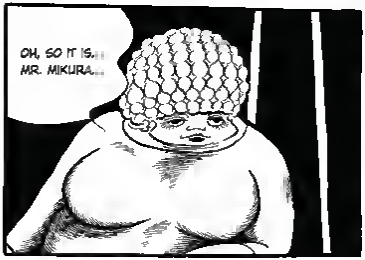
I KNOW YOU'RE WORKING FOR THE GREAT GODDESS PEOPLE!
YOU'RE TRYING TO SCARE ME BY HANGING THESE UP EVERY DAY!
THIS CURSED DOLL!
WH-WHAT ?
THAT IS A FALSE ACCUSATION, MR. MIKURA
WHAT DID YOU SAY? DON'T TOY WITH ME! WOULD I BE SO SURPRISED BY IT IF I HUNG IT UP MYSELF?!
THE ONE HANGING UP THAT DOLL IS YOU YOURSELF.
IT IS MERELY THAT YOU HAVE NO MEMORY OF HANGING IT UP.

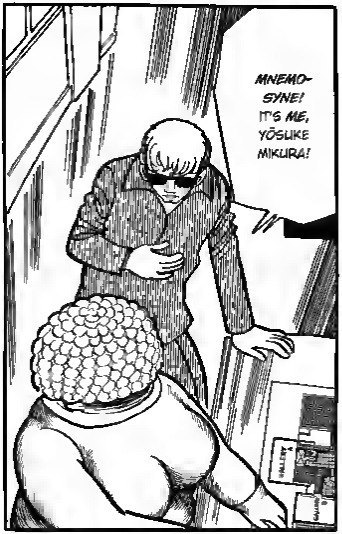
YOU WERE CAUGHT UP IN A HARMFUL DELUSION.
DO YOU SEE? LET ME EXPLAIN.
SINCE IT IS UNCONSCIOUS, OF COURSE YOU DO NOT REMEMBER IT. SO YOU THINK SOMEONE ELSE HAS DONE IT.
YOU ARE FRIGHTENED OF THIS DOLL, BUT YOU YOURSELF MADE IT AND BEGAN CARRYING IT AROUND, AND YOU UNCONSCIOUSLY HANG IT UP.
STOP PLAYING WITH MY HEAD... EVEN IF IT WERE UNCONSCIOUS, WHY WOULD I CONTINUE DOING IT?
AND HANG IT UP, OVER AND OVER.
THEN AFTER YOUR OUTBURST, YOU QUIETLY PICK UP THE DOLL AGAIN...

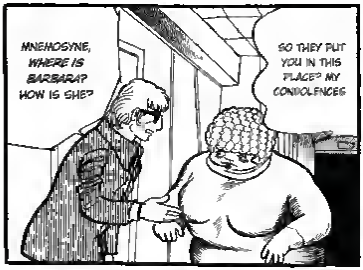

AND THOSE FEELINGS HAVE TO DO WITH A WOMAN BARBARA, I THINK HER NAME WAS
BAR-BARA
THEY WEIGH HEAVILY ON YOUR HEART, SO YOU TRY TO ESCAPE THEM THROUGH MASOCHISTIC SUFFERING
BECAUSE YOU CARRY UNRESOLVED FEELINGS.
ONE OF THESE MUST HAPPEN
WILL YOU RETURN TO THAT WOMAN? OR WOULD YOU RATHER SETTLE THESE FEELINGS?
THAT'S WHY WE CAN TALK LIKE THIS
YOUR ILLNESS HAS ALWAYS BEEN RELATIVELY MINOR, MR. MIKURA.
I DON'T THINK EITHER OF THOSE WOULD HEAL ME COMPLETELY
I WAS BORN A DEVIANT

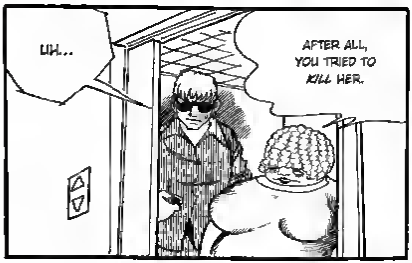
HOW DO YOU FEEL?
WE'RE GETTING BY... I STARTED WORK
WHAT ARE YOU *LIVING ON?*
I'M IN THE HOSPITAL FOR A *MINOR ILLNESS*, HE SAYS...
HEY! ISN'T THAT YŌSUKE MIKURA, THE AUTHOR?
IT CAN'T BE...
WHO'S YŌSUKE MIKURA?
DOES IT *MATTER* WHERE? WHAT MATTERS IS...
WHERE?
I WANT YOU TO *CUT ALL YOUR TIES* TO BARBARA *QUICKLY.*

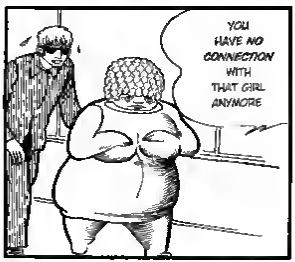

THAT'S MNEMOSYNE !!

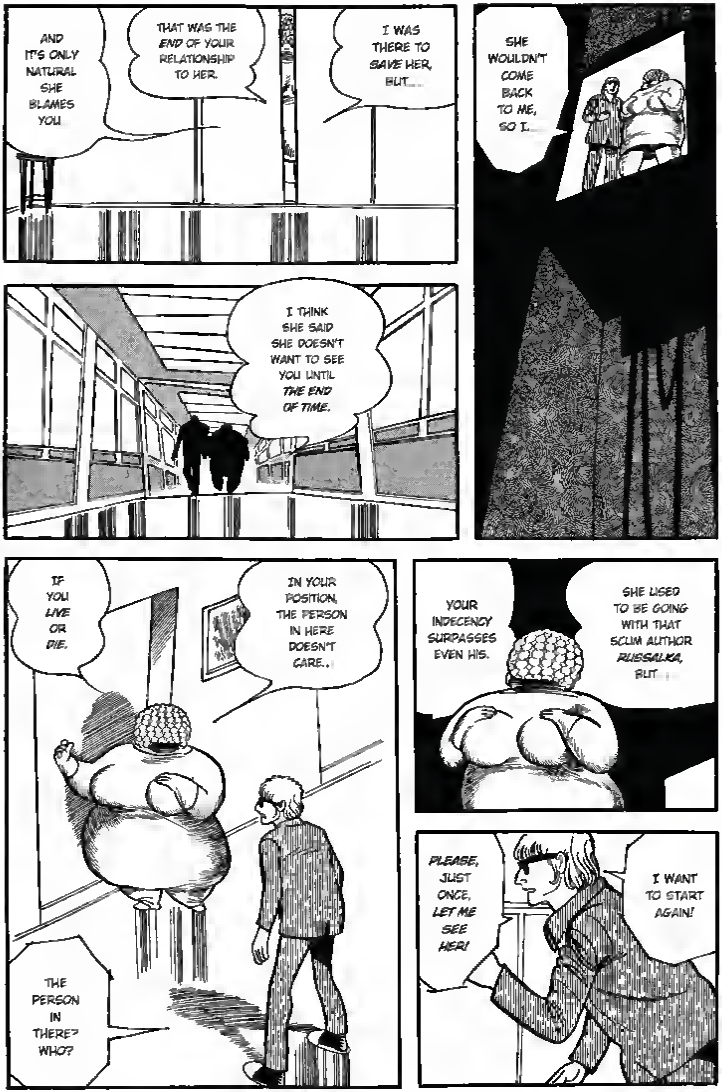

OH, SO IT IS... MR. MIKURA...


MNEMO-SYNE! IT'S ME, YŌSUKE MIKURA!


MNEMOSYNE, WHERE IS BARBARA? HOW IS SHE?
SO THEY PUT YOU IN THIS PLACE? MY CONDOLENCES

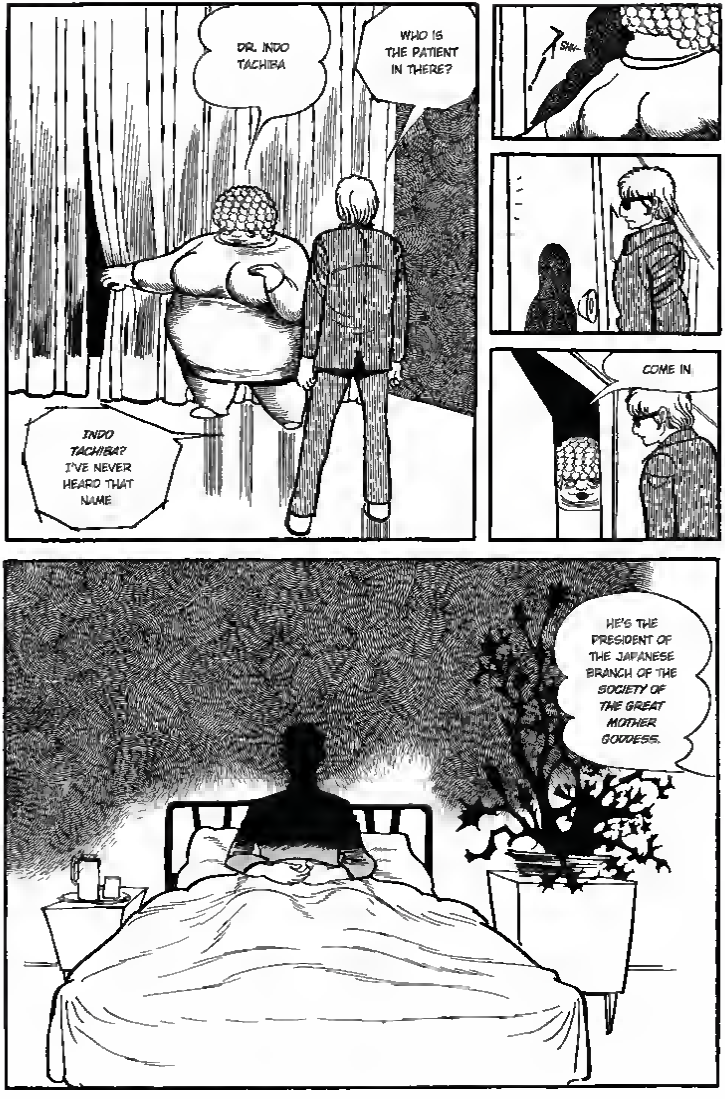

UH...
AFTER ALL, YOU TRIED TO KILL HER.

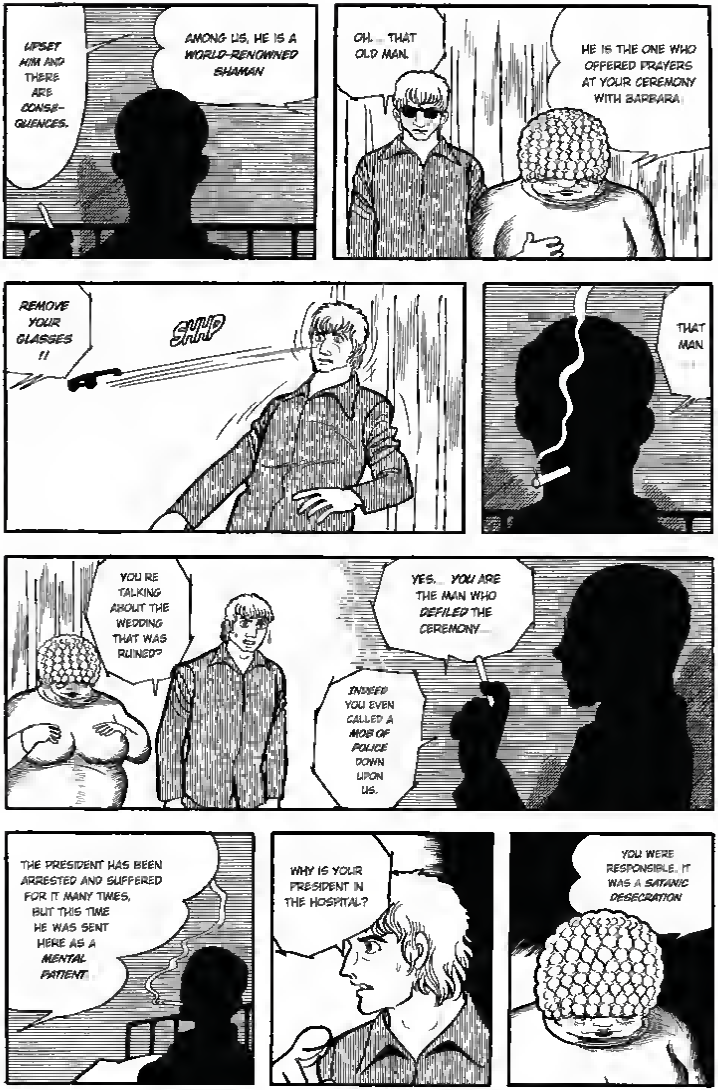

YOU HAVE NO CONNECTION WITH THAT GIRL ANYMORE


I WAS THERE TO SAVE HER, BUT...
THAT WAS THE END OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO HER.
AND IT'S ONLY NATURAL SHE BLAMES YOU.
SHE WOULDN'T COME BACK TO ME, SO I...
I THINK SHE SAID SHE DOESN'T WANT TO SEE YOU UNTIL THE END OF TIME.
IN YOUR POSITION, THE PERSON IN HERE DOESN'T CARE..
IF YOU LIVE OR DIE.
THE PERSON IN THERE? WHO?
SHE USED TO BE GOING WITH THAT SCUM AUTHOR RUSSALKA, BUT...
YOUR INDECENCY SURPASSES EVEN HIS.
I WANT TO START AGAIN!
PLEASE, JUST ONCE, LET ME SEE HER!

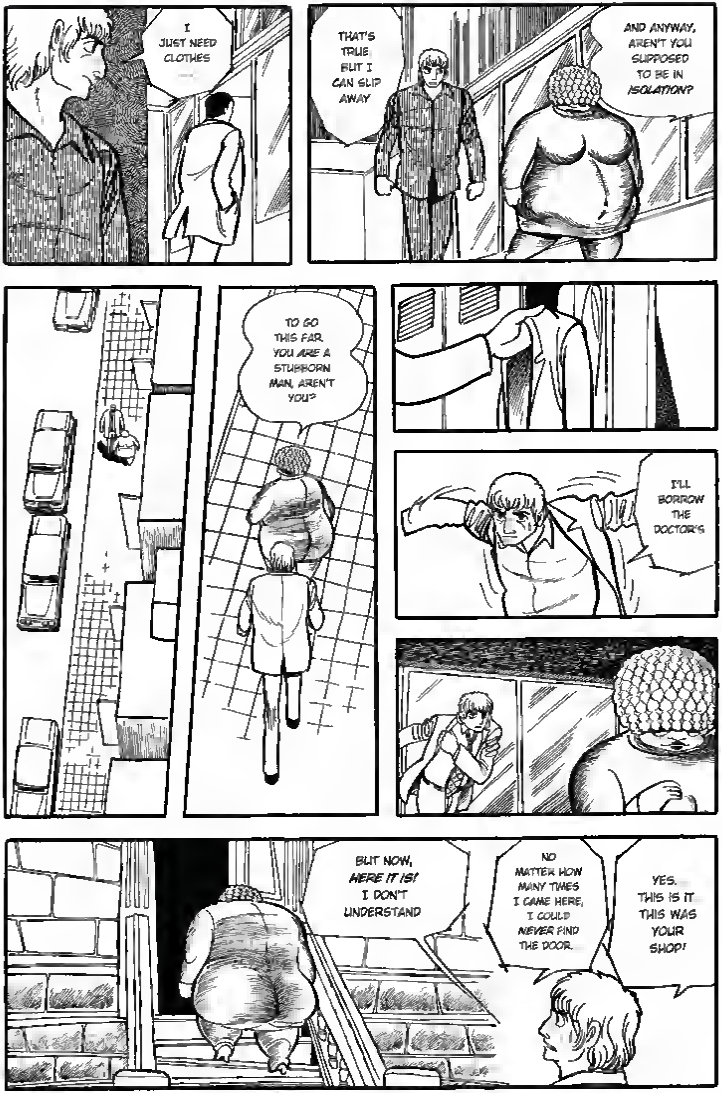
Barbara ばるぼら

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
VERDICT

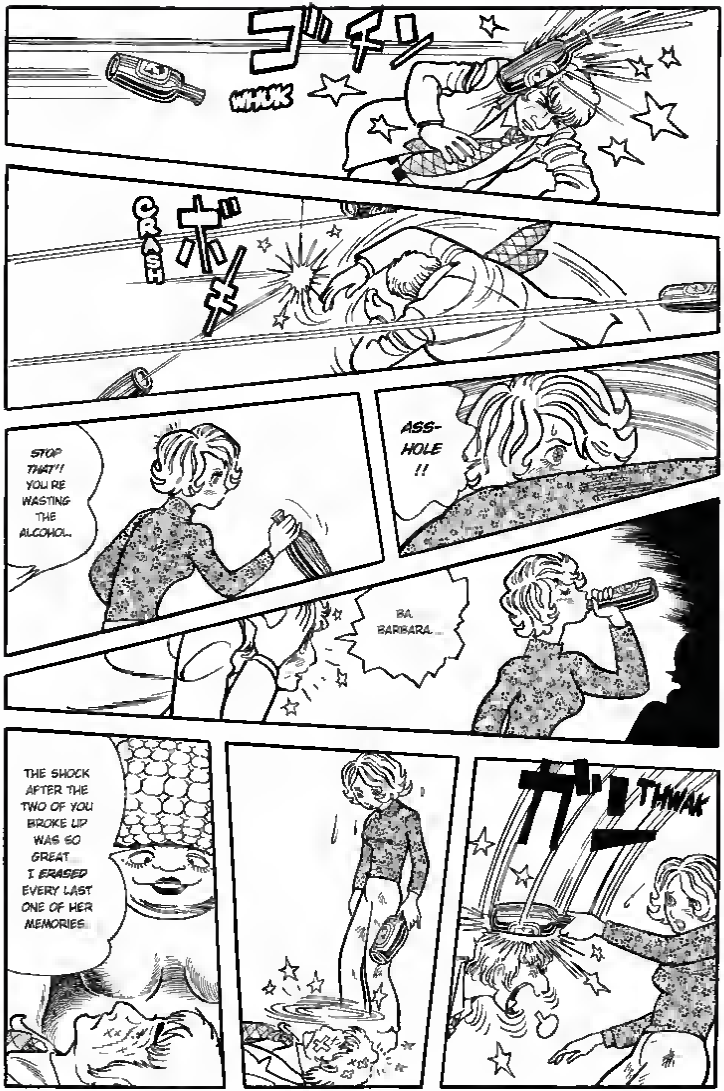

DR. INDO TACHIBA
WHO IS THE PATIENT IN THERE?
INDO TACHIBA? I'VE NEVER HEARD THAT NAME
SHH-
COME IN.
HE'S THE PRESIDENT OF THE JAPANESE BRANCH OF THE SOCIETY OF THE GREAT MOTHER GODDESS.

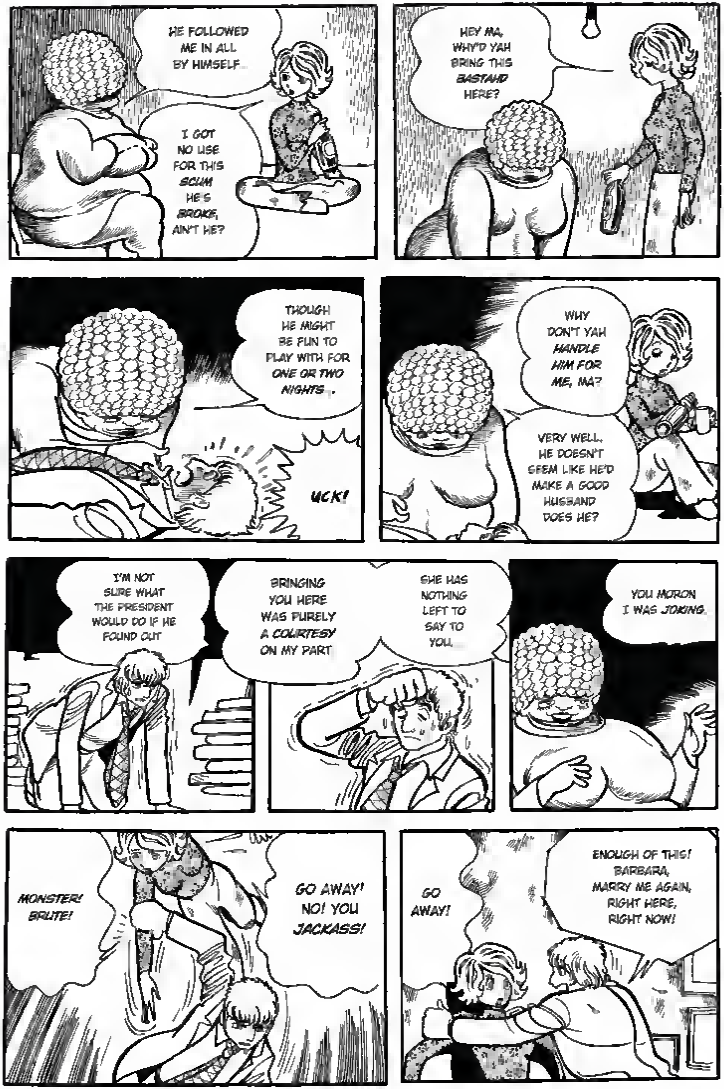

UPSET HIM AND THERE ARE CONSE-QUENCES.
AMONG US, HE IS A WORLD-RENOWNED SHAMAN
OH... THAT OLD MAN.
HE IS THE ONE WHO OFFERED PRAYERS AT YOUR CEREMONY WITH BARBARA.
REMOVE YOUR GLASSES !!
SHIP
THAT MAN
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE WEDDING THAT WAS RUINED?
YES... YOU ARE THE MAN WHO DEFILED THE CEREMONY...
INDEED! YOU EVEN CALLED A MOB OF POLICE DOWN UPON US.
THE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN ARRESTED AND SUFFERED FOR IT MANY TIMES, BUT THIS TIME HE WAS SENT HERE AS A MENTAL PATIENT.
WHY IS YOUR PRESIDENT IN THE HOSPITAL?
YOU WERE RESPONSIBLE. IT WAS A SATANIC DESECRATION

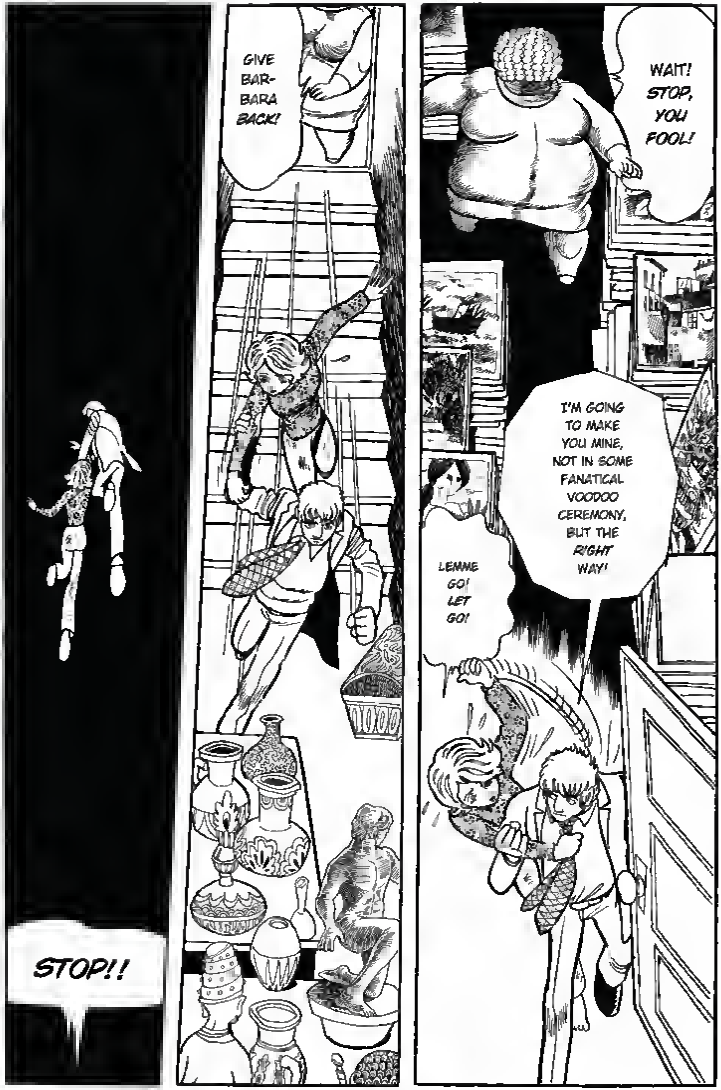
NORMALLY THIS WOULD BE UNFORGIVABLE YOU SHOULD BE PLEASED TO BE ALIVE
AND YOU EVEN ATTEMPTED TO MURDER THE GIRL
YOU HAVE BROUGHT SHAME NOT ONLY UPON THAT GIRL BUT ALSO UPON OUR ENTIRE COMMUNITY
YOU ARE NOW A COMPLETE STRANGER TO US
WE ARE DIFFERENT FROM NORMAL WORLDLY PEOPLE
I CAN'T ALLOW THAT IF YOU LAY A HAND ON THAT GIRL AGAIN, OUR COMMUNITY WILL HAVE TO ACT!
I WANT TO SEE BAR-BARA.
YOU'RE GOING TO WHERE BARBARA IS NOW, AREN'T YOU? I'LL FOLLOW YOU!
WHAT DOES IT MATTER THAT WE'RE DIFFERENT? SHE WAS ALWAYS BY MY SIDE!
GIVE IT A REST
DO AS YOU PLEASE BUT I WON'T BE RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT SHE SAYS.

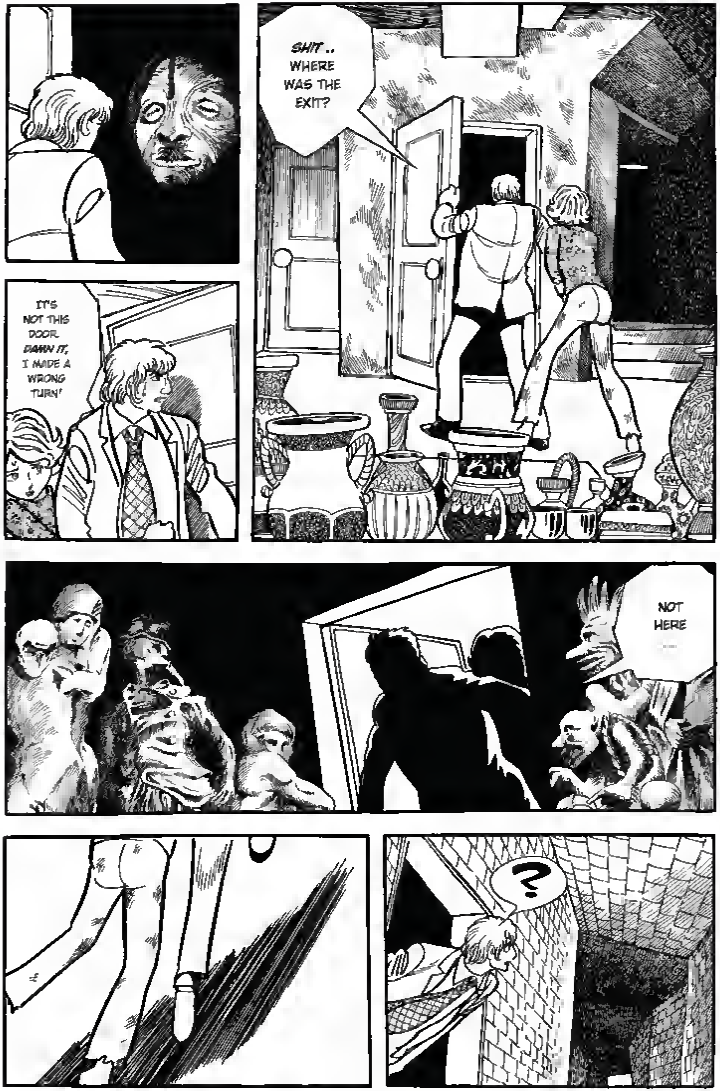

I JUST NEED CLOTHES
THAT'S TRUE. BUT I CAN SLIP AWAY
AND ANYWAY, AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE IN ISOLATION?
TO GO THIS FAR, YOU ARE A STUBBORN MAN, AREN'T YOU?
I'LL BORROW THE DOCTOR'S
BUT NOW, HERE IT IS! I DON'T UNDERSTAND
NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I CAME HERE, I COULD NEVER FIND THE DOOR.
YES. THIS IS IT. THIS WAS YOUR SHOP!

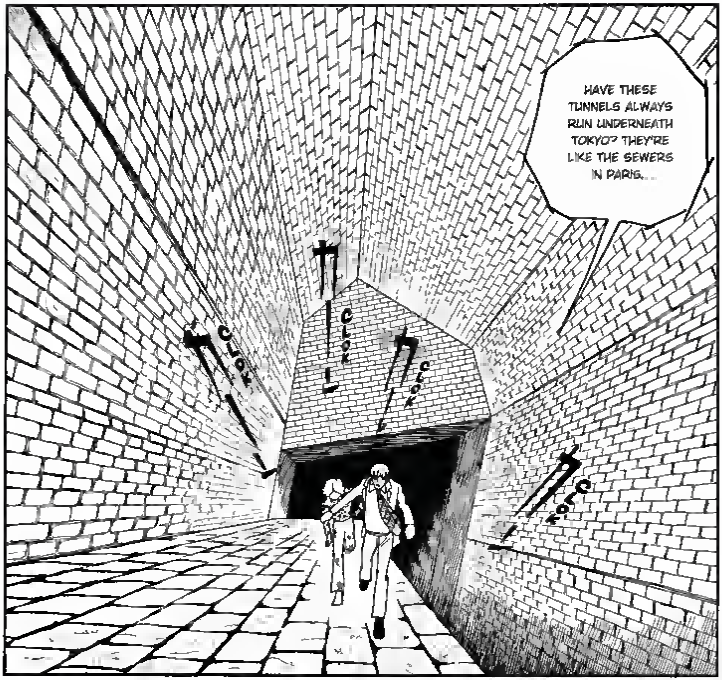
SO BARBARA WAS HIDING OUT HERE JUST AS I SUSPECTED!
MURDERER!
GASP!

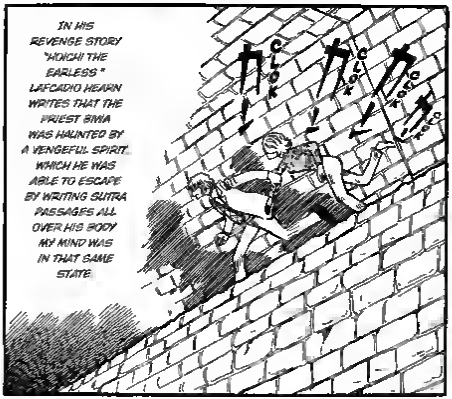

WHOOK
CRASH
STOP THAT!! YOU'RE WASTING THE ALCOHOL..
ASS-HOLE !!
BA BARBARA...
THE SHOCK AFTER THE TWO OF YOU BROKE UP WAS SO GREAT I ERASED EVERY LAST ONE OF HER MEMORIES.
THWAK

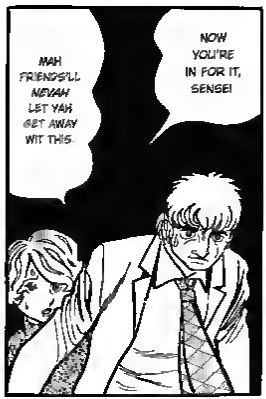

HE FOLLOWED ME IN ALL BY HIMSELF...
I GOT NO USE FOR THIS SCUM HE'S BROKE, AIN'T HE?
HEY MA, WHY'D YAH BRING THIS BASTARD HERE?
THOUGH HE MIGHT BE FUN TO PLAY WITH FOR ONE OR TWO NIGHTS...
UCK!
WHY DON'T YAH HANDLE HIM FOR ME, MA?
VERY WELL. HE DOESN'T SEEM LIKE HE'D MAKE A GOOD HUSBAND DOES HE?
I'M NOT SURE WHAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD DO IF HE FOUND OUT
BRINGING YOU HERE WAS PURELY A COURTESY ON MY PART
SHE HAS NOTHING LEFT TO SAY TO YOU.
YOU MORON I WAS JOKING.
MONSTER! BRUTE!
GO AWAY! NO! YOU JACKASS!
GO AWAY!
ENOUGH OF THIS! BARBARA, MARRY ME AGAIN, RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW!

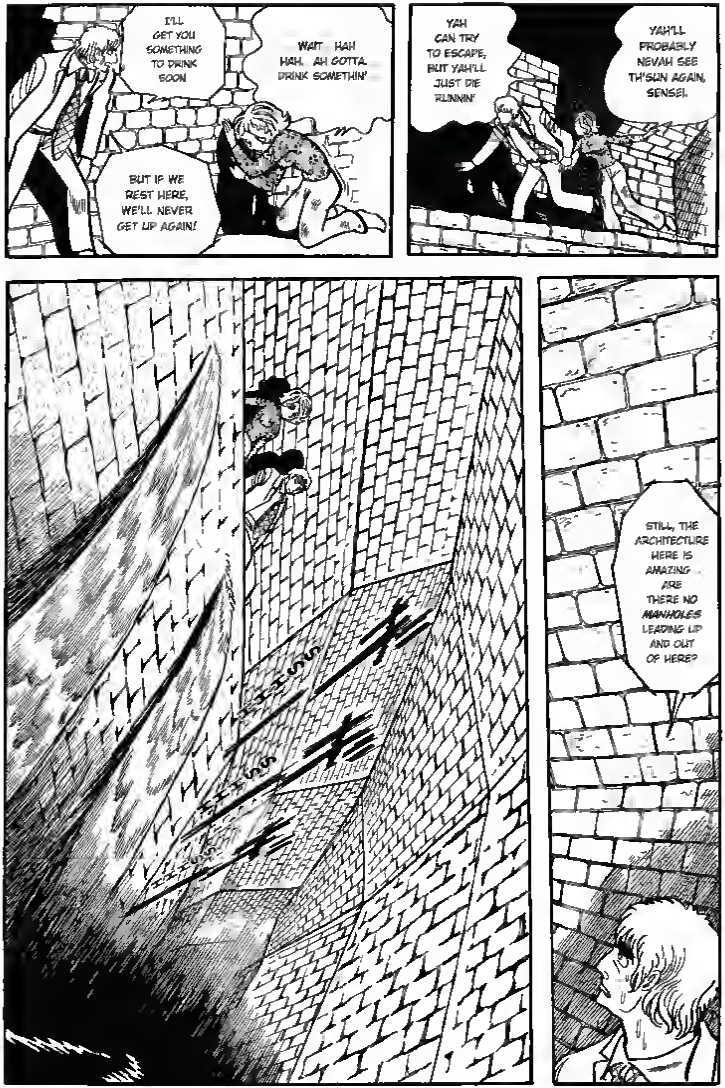

WAIT! STOP, YOU FOOL!
I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU MINE, NOT IN SOME FANATICAL VOODOO CEREMONY, BUT THE RIGHT WAY!
LEMME GO! LET GO!
GIVE BAR-BARA BACK!
STOP!!


SHIT.. WHERE WAS THE EXIT?
IT'S NOT THIS DOOR. DAMN IT, I MADE A WRONG TURN!
NOT HERE
?


HAVE THESE TUNNELS ALWAYS RUN UNDERNEATH TOKYO? THEY'RE LIKE THE SEWERS IN PARIS...
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK


IN HIS REVENGE STORY "HOICHI THE EARLESS," LAFCADIO HEARN WRITES THAT THE PRIEST BIWA WAS HAUNTED BY A VENGEFUL SPIRIT. WHICH HE WAS ABLE TO ESCAPE BY WRITING SUTRA PASSAGES ALL OVER HIS BODY. MY MIND WAS IN THAT SAME STATE.
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK

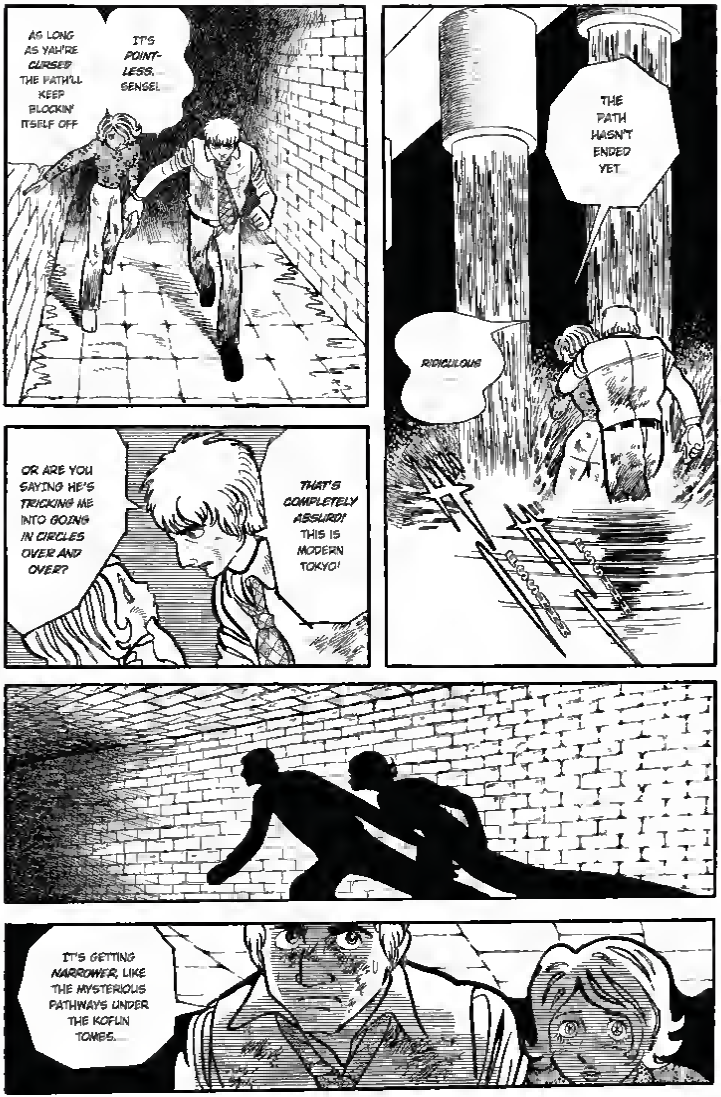

NOW YOU'RE IN FOR IT, SENSEI
MAH FRIENDS'LL NEVAH LET YAH GET AWAY WIT THIS.


I'LL GET YOU SOMETHING TO DRINK SOON
WAIT... HAH HAH... AH GOTTA DRINK SOMETHIN'
BUT IF WE REST HERE, WE'LL NEVER GET UP AGAIN!
YAH CAN TRY TO ESCAPE, BUT YAH'LL JUST DIE RUNNIN'
YAH'LL PROBABLY NEVAH SEE TH'SUN AGAIN, SENSEI.
STILL, THE ARCHITECTURE HERE IS AMAZING... ARE THERE NO MANHOLES LEADING UP AND OUT OF HERE?

NO SENSE CRYING ABOUT IT NOW
LOOKS LIKE IT YAH SHOULDA JUS LEFT ME ALONE!
WE'RE OUT OF TIME
IT'S FLOODIN'
YOU CAN DRINK UNTIL YOU PASS OUT AT THE WEDDING RECEPTION.
AH'M COLD! AH'LL GET PNEUMONIA! GIMME SOME WHISKY!
NAH! WHO'S GONNA MARRY YOU? IT'S RIDICULOUS!
'SA DEAD END
OR WOULD YOU PREFER A LOVERS' SUICIDE?

DON'T SLIP!
DON'T PUSH, MAH PANTS'LL LEAK!
WE DID PRETTY GOOD... ALL THINGS CONSIDERED...
AH!
YES, BUT IF WE FOLLOW THE DIRECTION THE WATER IS FLOWING FROM, WE HAVE A GOOD CHANCE OF MAKING IT ABOVE GROUND
SSHH
SSHH

IT CAN'T... IT CAN'T BE...
THERE MUST BE CARS AND PEOPLE ABOVE US!
BARBARA, LET'S GO AT THIS RATE, WE'LL WALK UNTIL WE DIE.
IT CAN'T END THIS WAY!

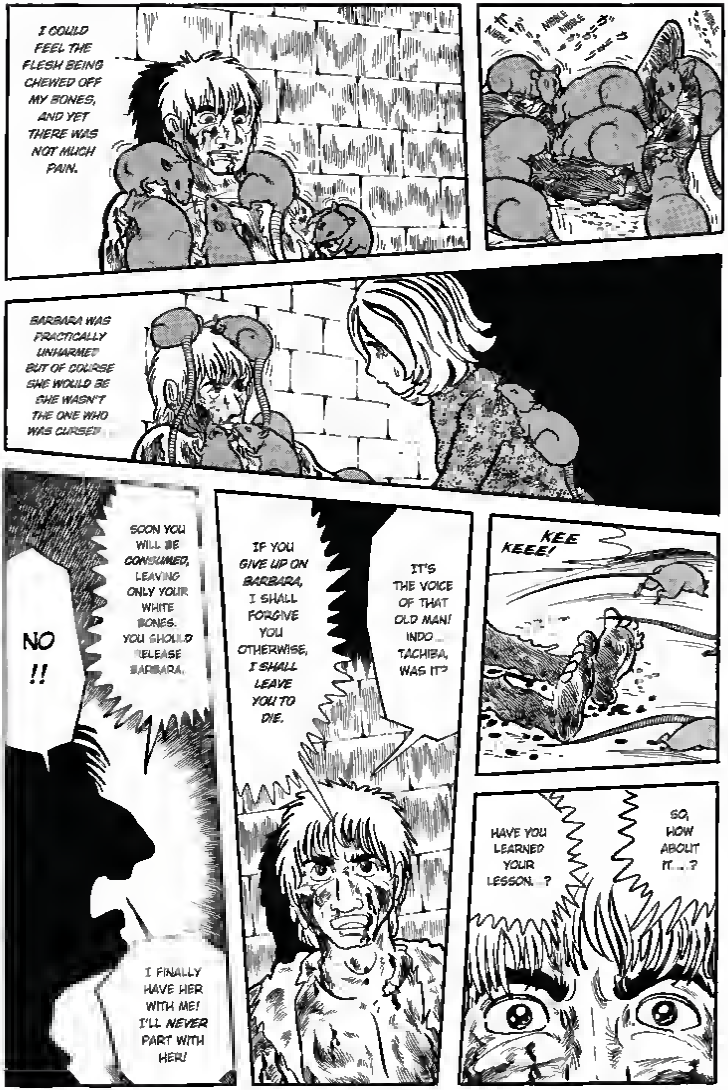

AS LONG AS YAH'RE CURSED THE PATH'LL KEEP BLOCKIN' ITSELF OFF
IT'S POINT-LESS, SENSEI
THE PATH HASN'T ENDED YET
RIDICULOUS
OR ARE YOU SAYING HE'S TRICKING ME INTO GOING IN CIRCLES OVER AND OVER?
THAT'S COMPLETELY ASSURD! THIS IS MODERN TOKYO!
IT'S GETTING NARROWER, LIKE THE MYSTERIOUS PATHWAYS UNDER THE KOFUN TOMBS...

UGH, THIS IS DISGUSTING!
CAN WE REALLY GET THROUGH THIS?
SPLORK!
ズゴ
SQUELCH
IT'S LIKE BEING INSIDE A SEPTIC TANK!

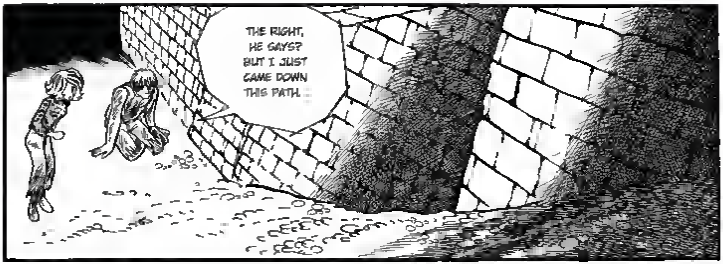
IT'S ALMOST AS IF WE'VE WANDERED INTO A SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT...
HUK
ズボッ!!
SPLOT
BARBARA? WHERE ARE YOU?
SPLOT
SPLAT
WE MADE IT... SOMEHOW
WH... WHAT TORTURE WILL WE SLIPPER NEXT?

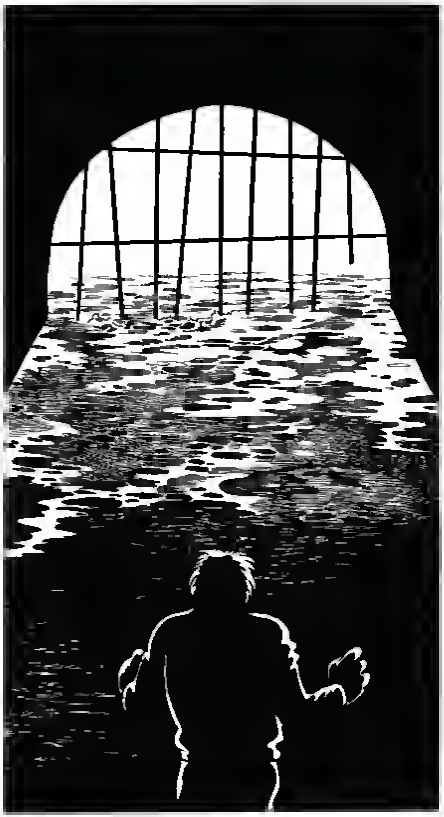
KEEKEE KEEKEE!
KLIK
KEE! KEE!
NIBBLE NIBBLE NIBBLE
SHIT!
STUPID VERMIN!
KEE! KEE! KEE!
KEEKEE! KEEKEE KEE!
KEE KEEE!

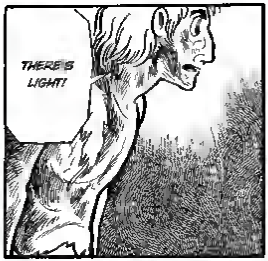
KEEE!
KREEKREE!
YOU DAMN RATS!
WAAAH!
KEE!
CHEE!

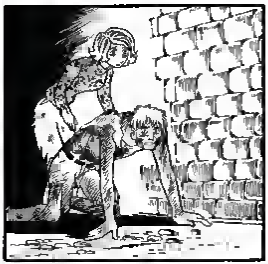

I COULD FEEL THE FLESH BEING CHEWED OFF MY BONES, AND YET THERE WAS NOT MUCH PAIN.
NIBBLE NIBBLE NIBBLE NIBBLE
BARBARA WAS PRACTICALLY UNHARMED! BUT OF COURSE SHE WOULD BE. SHE WASN'T THE ONE WHO WAS CURSED!
SOON YOU WILL BE CONSUMED, LEAVING ONLY YOUR WHITE BONES. YOU SHOULD RELEASE BARBARA.
NO !!
I FINALLY HAVE HER WITH ME! I'LL NEVER PART WITH HER!
IF YOU GIVE UP ON BARBARA, I SHALL FORGIVE YOU. OTHERWISE, I SHALL LEAVE YOU TO DIE.
IT'S THE VOICE OF THAT OLD MAN! INDO ... TACHIBA, WAS IT?
KEE KEEE!
SO, HOW ABOUT IT ...?
HAVE YOU LEARNED YOUR LESSON ...?

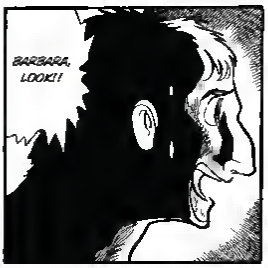
YOU WERE A RESPECTED MAN ONCE! SURELY THERE IS ANOTHER, BETTER WOMAN FOR YOU. NOT A WITCH, BUT A CITY GIRL...
SO NOW YOU'RE TRYING TO ARGUE WITH ME!
YOU ARE A TRULY CONTEMPTIBLE MAN. IS THIS WOMAN REALLY SO DEAR TO YOU, AT YOUR AGE, AND WITH A SON?
UNTIL THEN, YOU MAY BORROW THE GIRL.
AND YOUR DESTINY IS DEATH, FIVE HOURS FROM NOW.
UNFORTUNATE I HAVE JUST PEERED INTO YOUR FUTURE...
TO ME, THERE IS ONLY BARBARA.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME, WHY NOT DO IT NOW?
I'M READY TO DIE!
YOU MAY DO AS YOU WILL BUT REMEMBER, YOU HAVE ONLY FIVE HOURS LEFT.
TURN TOWARD THE RIGHT. THERE IS AN EXIT IN THAT DIRECTION.
SAY SOMETHING!
YOU GOT QUIET ALL OF A SUDDEN. HAVE YOU GIVEN UP?
ARE YOU THERE, OLD MAN?


THE RIGHT, HE SAYS? BUT I JUST CAME DOWN THIS PATH...




THERE'S LIGHT!



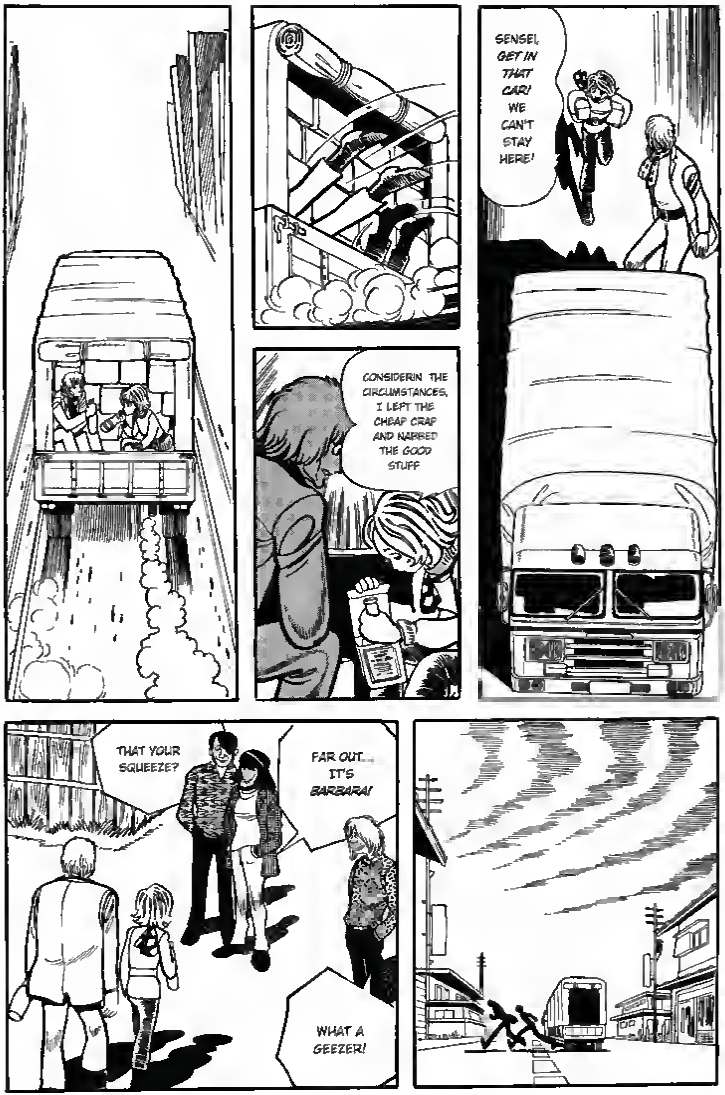

BARBARA, LOOK!!

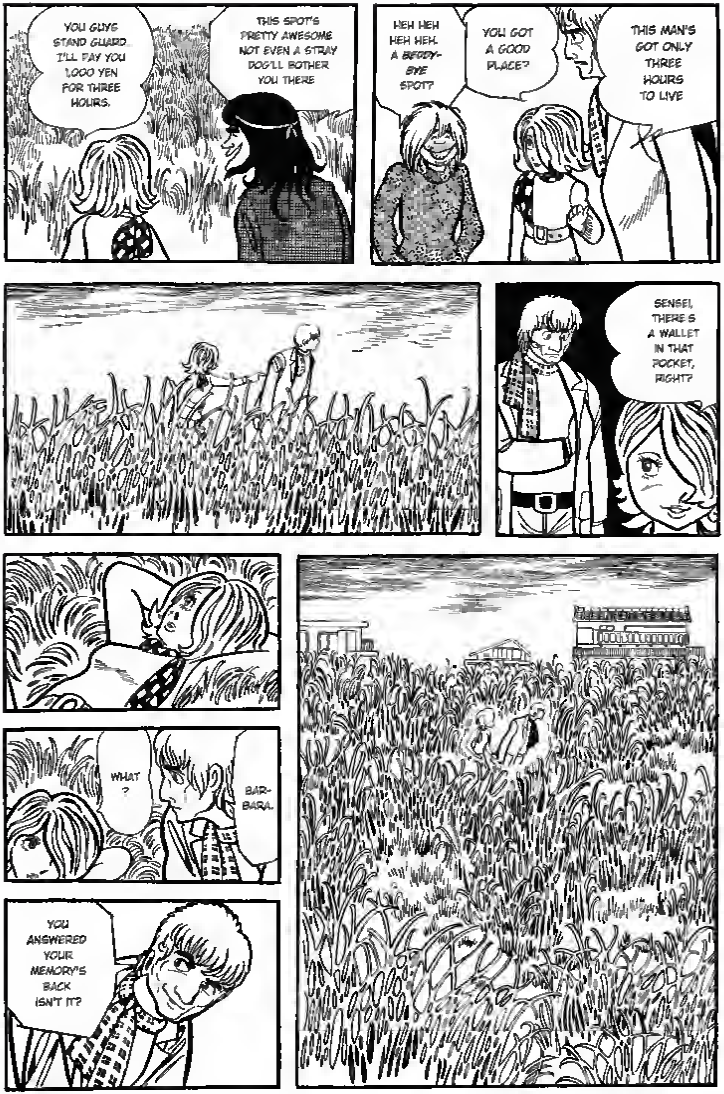
FUNNY... YOU'RE BEING NICE TO ME
YOUR LEGS LOOK BAD LIKE A COW IN A BUTCHER SHOP
INCREDIBLE! THE CITY WAS RIGHT IN FRONT OF OUR NOSES!
THIS LOOKS LIKE A CANAL. YES! IT'S CHIDORIGA-FUCHI! LOOK, YOU CAN SEE THE PARK!
EEK!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOUR LEGS?
IT STINKS... LIKE YOU JUST CAME UP OUT OF THE SEWERS.
WHAT HAPPENED? AN ACCIDENT?
PLEASE LEAVE ME ALONE
WHAT THE... NAME AND ADDRESS?

I'VE CALLED AN AMBULANCE, BUT WHILE YOU WAIT GO CLEAN YOURSELF OFF AT THAT WATER PUMP OVER THERE
I LOOKED DOWN AT MY LEGS. THE PARTS I THOUGHT HAD BEEN CHEWED OFF BY RATS WERE HORRIBLY BLOODY, BUT STILL ATTACHED. IT REALLY WAS A HALLUCINATION...
LET'S MAKE A RUN FOR THAT ALLEY
I DON'T WANT TO BOTHER WITH THE POLICE BARBARA, CAN YOU RUN?
YOU DO TOO...
SENSEI, YOU SMELL TERRIBLE
NOW!
THAT WAY!
HEY !

huff
huff
huff
WE CAN HIDE IN THERE!
SENSEI, YOU ONLY HAVE FOUR HOURS LEFT WHAT'LL YOU DO?
IF I SOLD THIS STORY TO TV THERE'D BE MORE THAN ENOUGH TO FILL A WHOLE YEAR OF EPISODES HAHAHAHA...
huff.. huff... huff...
HFFAHAH... HAHAHAHA... WHAT A FARCE THIS IS
WHAT WOULD YOU DO?
ME... I'D GO FOR A DRINK FIRST THEN HEAD SOMEPLACE...
THEN THAT'S WHAT WE'LL DO BUT NOT IN THESE RAGS
LIE DOWN AND SING FOR A BIT AND THOSE FOUR HOURS'D PASS IN NO TIME.

ACK!
?!
WE'RE GONNA BORROW YOUR CLOTHES. WE'LL BRING 'EM RIGHT BACK. C'MON, GET UNDRESSED! BOTH OF YOU!!
GET YOUR ASSES IN THERE
I'LL GO STOCK UP ON BOOZE YOU WAIT HERE.
AND IF EITHER OF YOU TRY TO GET AWAY I'LL MAKE YOU PAY!
LIQUOR
TEL
THIEF!


SENSEI, GET IN THAT CAR! WE CAN'T STAY HERE!
CONSIDERIN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I LEPT THE CHEAP CRAP AND NABBED THE GOOD STUFF
THAT YOUR SQUEEZE?
FAR OUT... IT'S BARBARA!
WHAT A GEEZER!

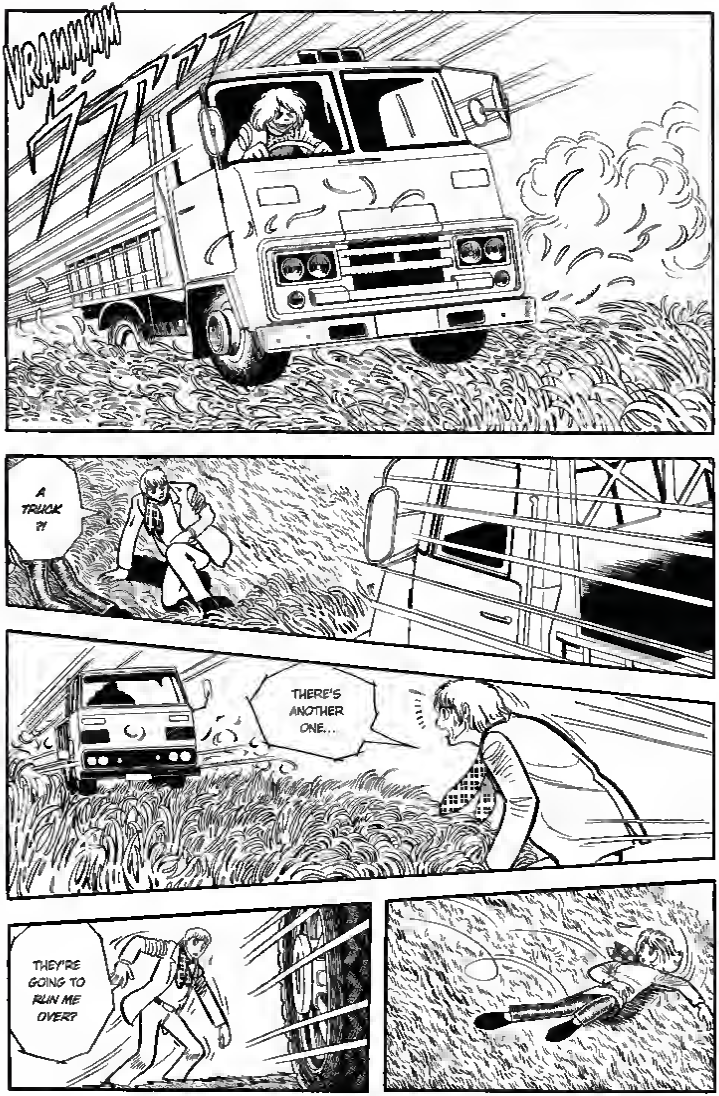

YOU GUYS STAND GUARD. I'LL PAY YOU 1,000 YEN FOR THREE HOURS.
THIS SPOT'S PRETTY AWESOME NOT EVEN A STRAY DOG'LL BOTHER YOU THERE
HEH HEH HEH HEH. A BRODY-BYE SPOT?
YOU GOT A GOOD PLACE?
THIS MAN'S GOT ONLY THREE HOURS TO LIVE
SENSEI, THERE IS A WALLET IN THAT POCKET, RIGHT?
WHAT ?
BAR-BARA.
YOU ANSWERED YOUR MEMORY'S BACK ISN'T IT?

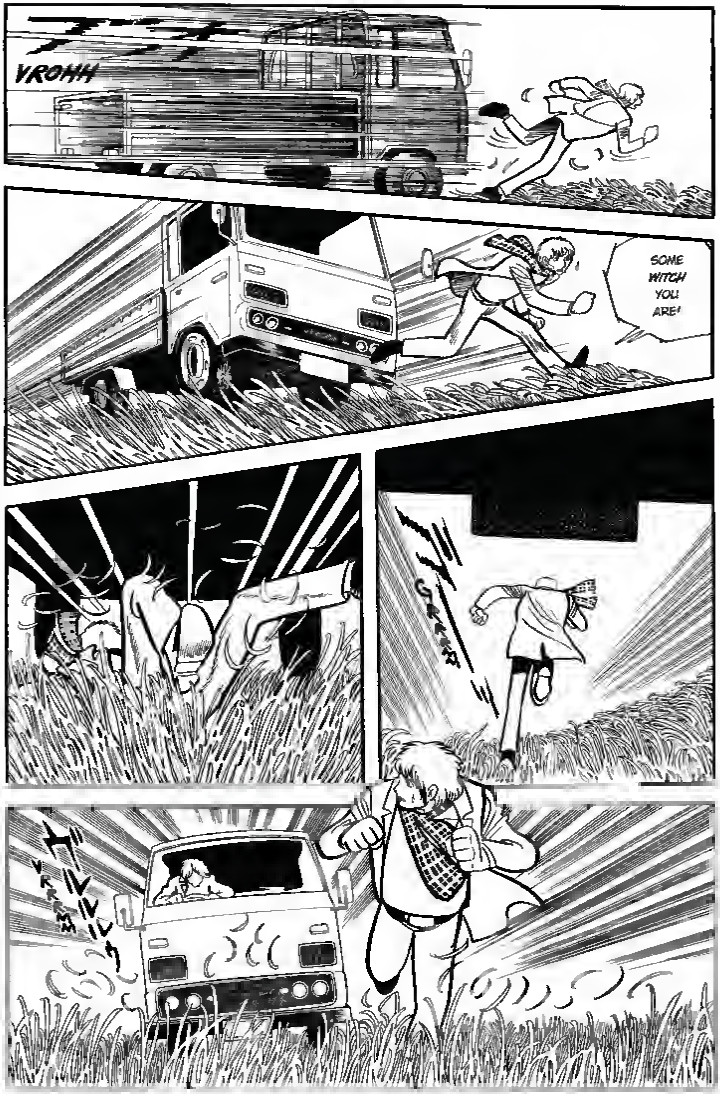
THAT OLD MAN TACHIBA'S A NICE GUY AFTER ALL HEH HEH HEH...
THAT YOU WOULD GO BACK TO YOUR OWN SELF AGAIN A FEW HOURS BEFORE I DIE...
WILL I DIE IN AN ACCIDENT...?
I WONDER HOW I WILL DIE
YEAH, WELL. EASY COME EASY GO IT WAS *FATE*, YOU KNOW
EVEN THOUGH YOU'VE ONLY GOT TWO-AND-A-HALF HOURS LEFT TO LIVE?
I SUPPOSE THERE'S NO WAY *YOU* OF ALL PEOPLE WOULD UNDERSTAND TRAGIC HEROISM
OR WILL THEY COME AND PUT A *DEATH CURSE* ON ME?
EVEN-TUALLY IT ROTS AWAY...
BUT MAYBE *ART IS LIKE THAT*
AND IS FOR-GOTTEN.
EXACTLY MY LIFE AND MY WORK WILL COME TO *NOTHING*
ON THE DAY PASSED BY, THE SKY WAS BLUE AND HOPES WERE HIGH YET NOW THOSE HOPES ARE DASHED, SCATTERED INTO THE ENDLESS DARKNESS

FEH. IT'S A HELL OF A LOT BETTER THAN THAT SEWER MAZE
HARDLY A FITTING ATMOSPHERE FOR SOMEONE ABOUT TO SHUFFLE OFF THIS MORTAL COIL
IT'S AWFULLY HOT OUT HERE...
ARE YOU REALLY THAT FAT OLD WOMAN'S YOUNGEST DAUGHTER?
IT'S ABOUT YOU, BARBARA.
THERE WAS SOMETHING I ALWAYS WANTED TO ASK YOU...
NO MATTER WHERE I WENT, IT DIDN'T WORK OUT...
PLUS, I'M A SLOB
A DECENT LIFE JUST DIDN'T SUIT ME
JOIN UP WITH HIPPIES AND GET MIXED UP WITH WRITERS AND PAINTERS?
AND WHY EXACTLY DID YOU...
NO REASON IN PARTICULAR.
LET ME SEE...

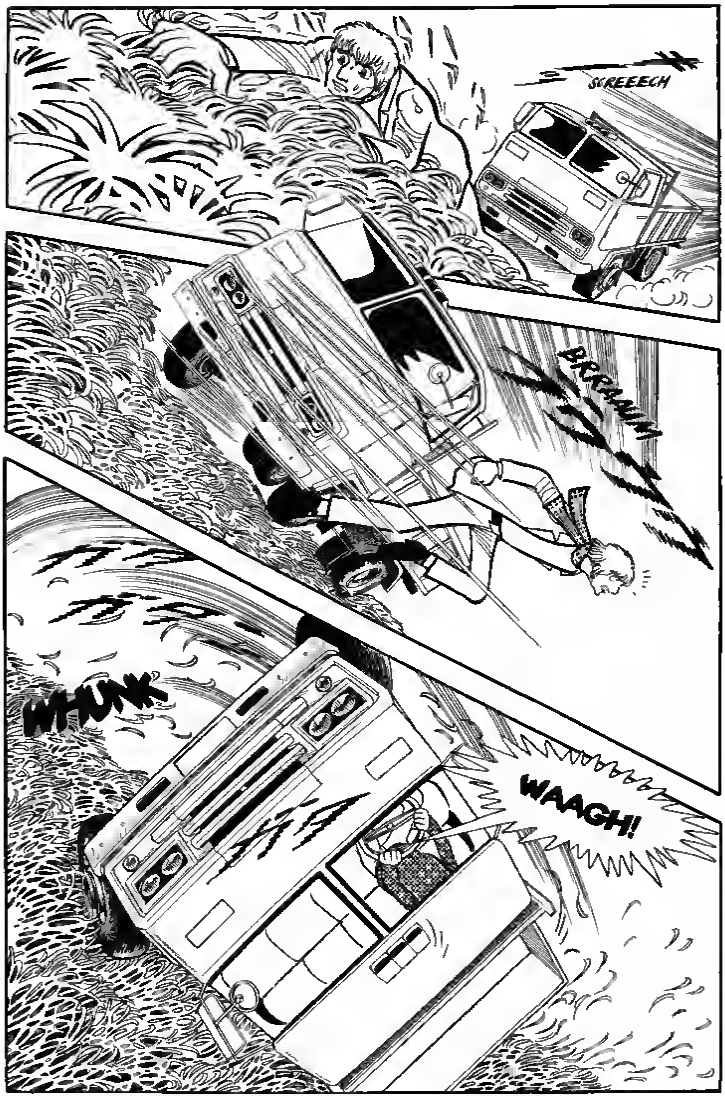
BUT YOU GOT ALONG WITH ARTISTS ...?
SENSEI... ACTUALLY, I'M THE ONE WHO'S SUPPOSED TO KILL YOU, WHEN THE TIME COMES.

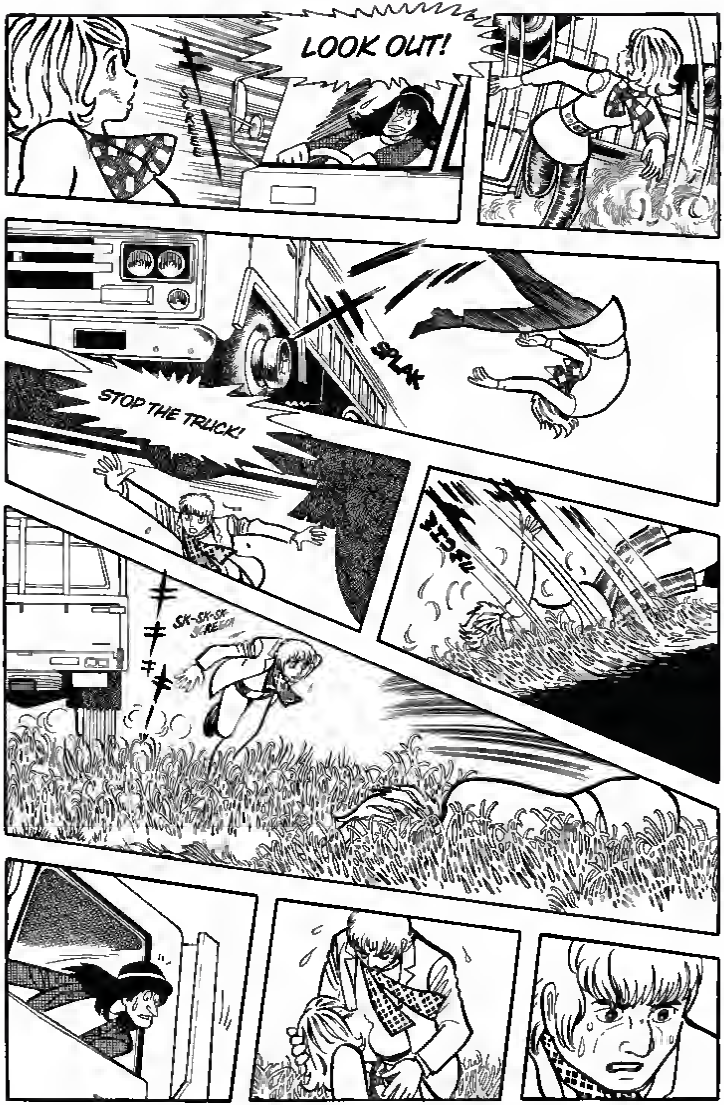
NOT THAT MANY MAYBE ABOUT A HUNDRED.
HOW MANY ARTISTS HAVE YOU CHANGED?
I THOUGHT THAT MIGHT BE THE CASE
THAT'S WHAT THEY TOLD ME. THEY SAID HOW WAS UP TO ME.
LET ME SEE. THE ONES I ABANDONED DIED DESTITUTE
AND HOW DID THEY ALL TURN OUT?
SENSEI, I'M SORRY TIME'S ALMOST UP
ART, POPULARITY... HOW THEY HOLD NO ATTRACTION FOR ME
I SEE. I SUPPOSE I'M ONE OF THOSE.
NEARLY TIME FOR ME TO DIE? HOW WILL YOU DO THE DEED?

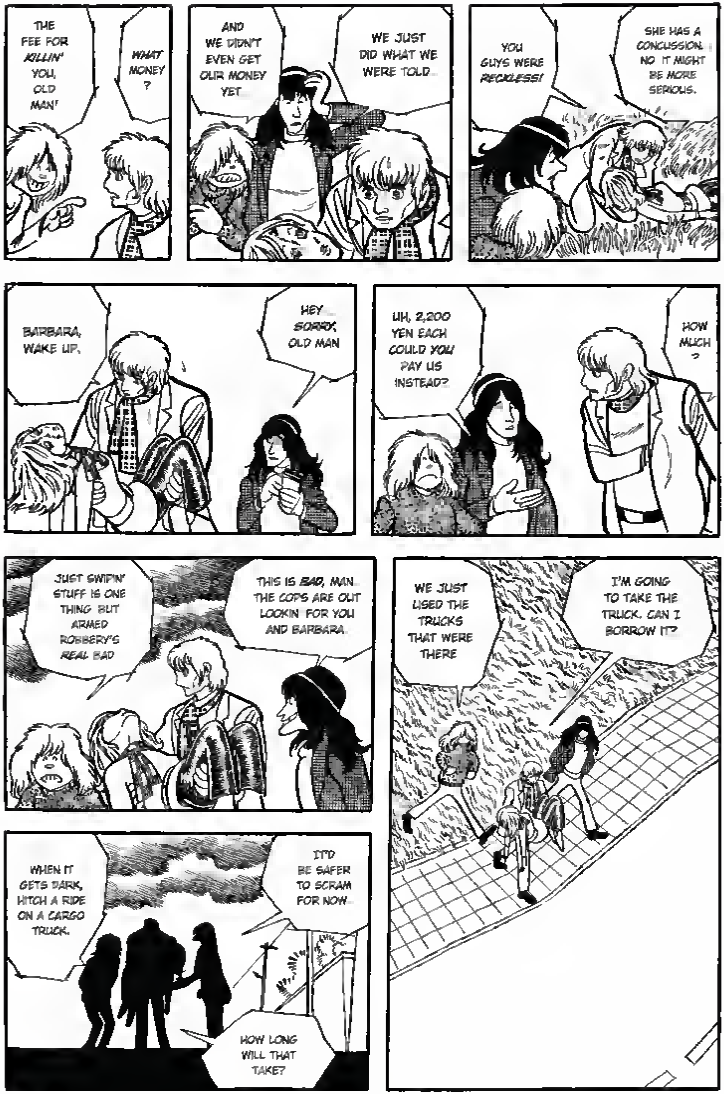

VRRRRRR
A TRUCK?!
THERE'S ANOTHER ONE...
THEY'RE GOING TO RUN ME OVER?


VROHH
SOME WITCH YOU ARE!
GEEK!

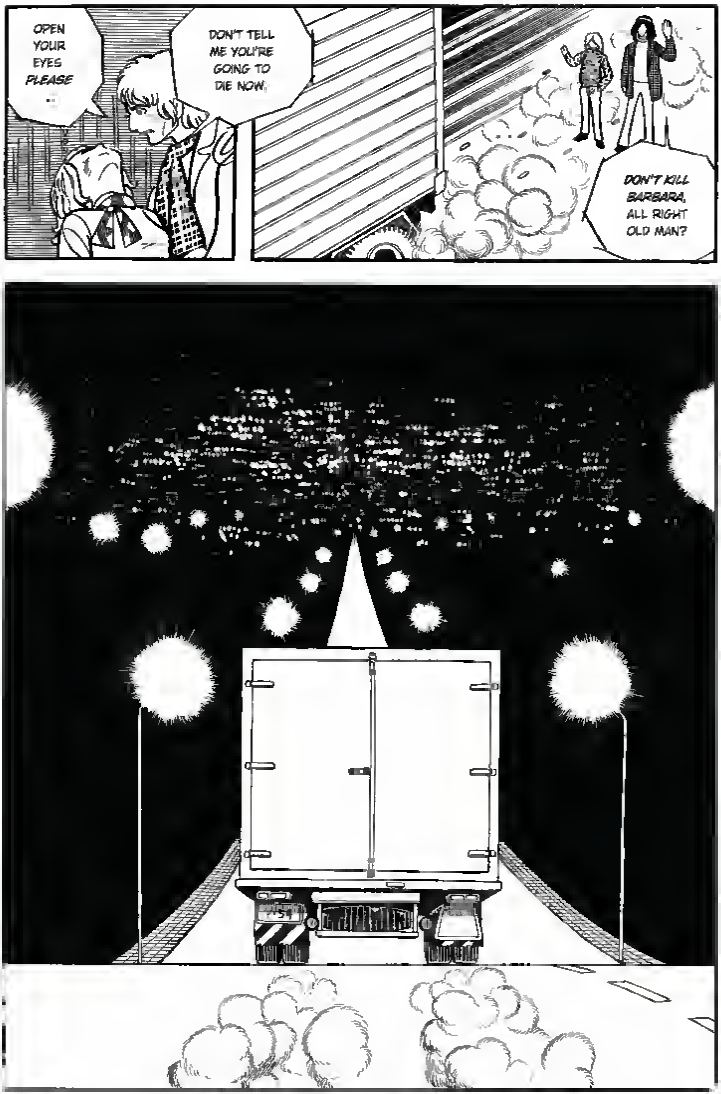
YOU HAVE TO BE KIDDING!
VRRR
IF YOU GET RUN OVER, IT'LL LOOK LIKE A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT. I'M SORRY, SENSEI!!
KROO
THIS IS JUST SO BANAL!
WHAT ABOUT POISON OR IMMOLATION? THERE'S GOT TO BE A MORE ROMANTIC WAY TO KILL ME!
VROOOO


SCREEECH
BRRAAUM
WHUNK
WAAGH!


LOOK OUT!
SPLAK
STOP THE TRUCK!
SK-SK-SK
SKREEE!

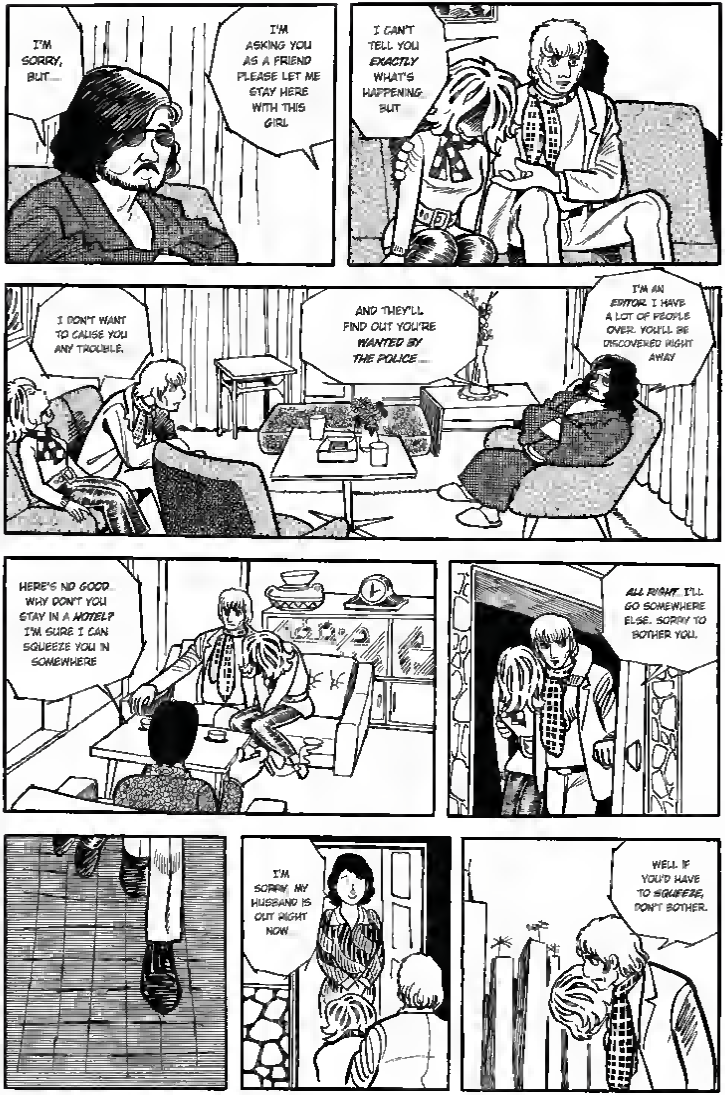

THE FEE FOR KILLIN' YOU, OLD MAN!
WHAT MONEY?
AND WE DIDN'T EVEN GET OUR MONEY YET...
WE JUST DID WHAT WE WERE TOLD...
YOU GUYS WERE RECKLESS!
SHE HAS A CONCUSSION. NO, IT MIGHT BE MORE SERIOUS.
BARBARA, WAKE UP!
HEY... SORRY, OLD MAN
UH, 2,200 YEN EACH COULD YOU PAY US INSTEAD?
HOW MUCH?
JUST SWIPIN' STUFF IS ONE THING, BUT ARMED ROBBERY'S REAL BAD
THIS IS BAD, MAN. THE COPS ARE OUT LOOKIN' FOR YOU AND BARBARA.
WE JUST USED THE TRUCKS THAT WERE THERE
I'M GOING TO TAKE THE TRUCK. CAN I BORROW IT?
WHEN IT GETS DARK, HITCH A RIDE ON A CARGO TRUCK.
IT'D BE SAFER TO SCRAM FOR NOW...
HOW LONG WILL THAT TAKE?

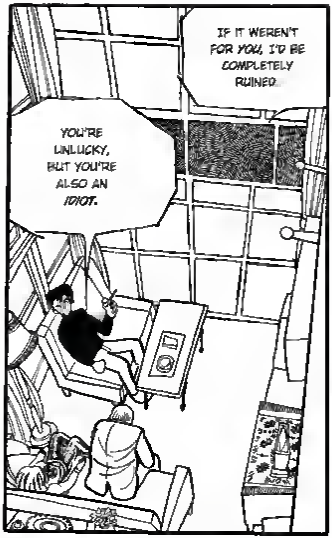
DOWN TA OSAKA, BUT WHAS WRONG WID HER?
WHERE YOU HEADED?
PAY UP FRONT!
CAN YA TAKE THESE TWO FOR 5,000 YEN? THEY CAN RIDE IN THE BACK.
VRRRRR
HE'S GOT EXACTLY 5,000
HEY, I DON'T HAVE 5,000 YEN LEFT!
HERE YA GO
SHEESH... THAT'S WHY WE'RE TAKIN' IT OUTTA THE DRIVER'S WALLET!

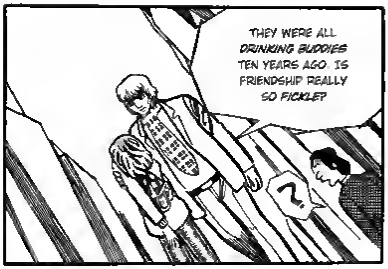

OPEN YOUR EYES PLEASE
DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE GOING TO DIE NOW.
DON'T KILL BARBARA, ALL RIGHT OLD MAN?

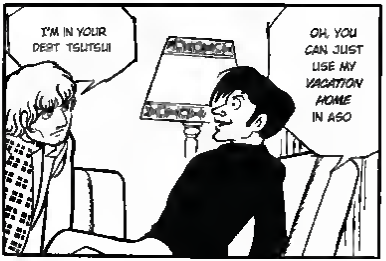
Barbara ばるばら

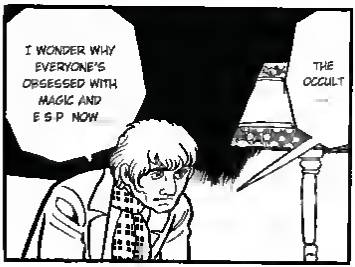
CHAPTER FOURTEEN
PATHOS IN
THE MIST


I'M SORRY, BUT...
I'M ASKING YOU AS A FRIEND PLEASE LET ME STAY HERE WITH THIS GIRL
I CAN'T TELL YOU EXACTLY WHAT'S HAPPENING, BUT
I DON'T WANT TO CAUSE YOU ANY TROUBLE.
AND THEY'LL FIND OUT YOU'RE WANTED BY THE POLICE...
I'M AN EDITOR. I HAVE A LOT OF PEOPLE OVER. YOU'LL BE DISCOVERED RIGHT AWAY
HERE'S NO GOOD... WHY DON'T YOU STAY IN A HOTEL? I'M SURE I CAN SQUEEZE YOU IN SOMEWHERE
ALL RIGHT. I'LL GO SOMEWHERE ELSE. SORRY TO BOTHER YOU.
I'M SORRY, MY HUSBAND IS OUT RIGHT NOW.
WELL IF YOU'D HAVE TO HIDE FIRST, DON'T BOTHER.


IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU, I'D BE COMPLETELY RUINED...
YOU'RE UNLUCKY, BUT YOU'RE ALSO AN IDIOT.


THEY WERE ALL DRINKING BUDDIES TEN YEARS AGO. IS FRIENDSHIP REALLY SO FICKLE?
?


I'M IN YOUR DEBT TSUTSUI
OH, YOU CAN JUST USE MY VACATION HOME IN ASO

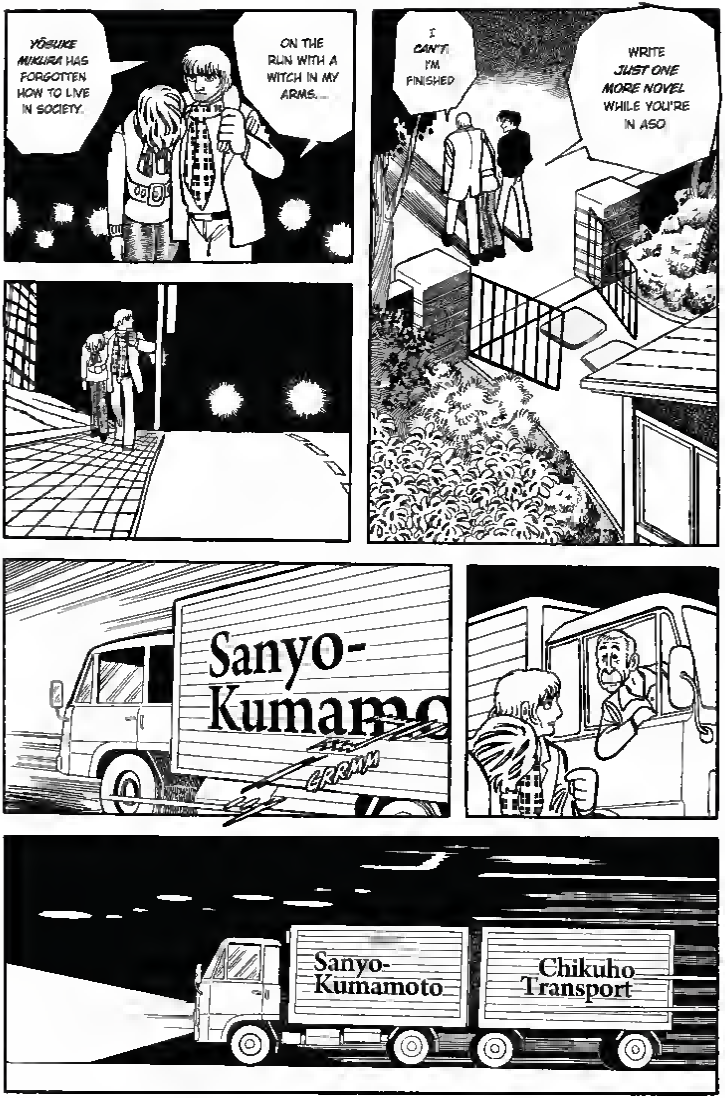

I WONDER WHY EVERYONE'S OBSESSED WITH MAGIC AND E S P NOW...
THE OCCULT ...

WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF AN OCCULT BOOM RIGHT NOW. WITH ALL THE OCCULT PEOPLE TRYING TO GET NOTICED IN THE MEDIA, YOU CAN NAME YOUR PRICE FOR THAT STUFF

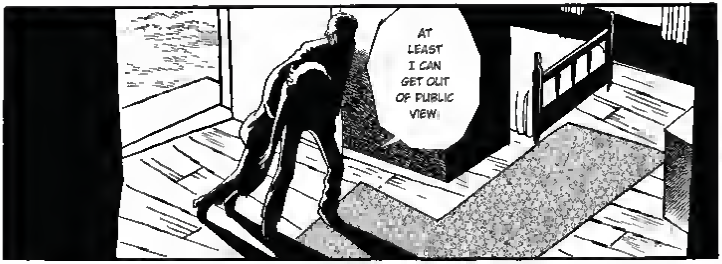
PEOPLE TODAY YEARN FOR ROMANCE

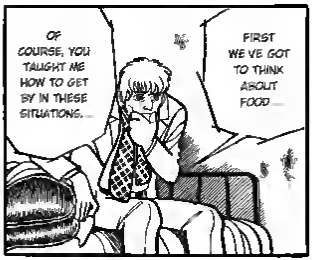
HUH?

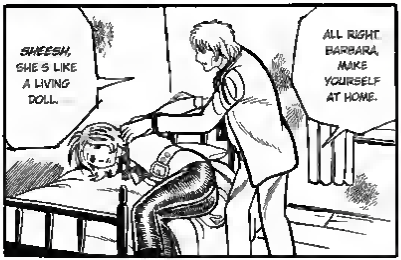
IT'S ROMANTIC.

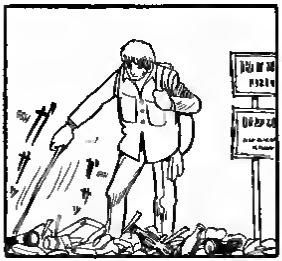

YŌSUKE MIKURA HAS FORGOTTEN HOW TO LIVE IN SOCIETY.
ON THE RUN WITH A WITCH IN MY ARMS...
I CAN'T. I'M FINISHED
WRITE JUST ONE MORE NOVEL WHILE YOU'RE IN ASO
Sanyo-Kumamo
GRUM
Sanyo-Kumamoto
Chikuho Transport

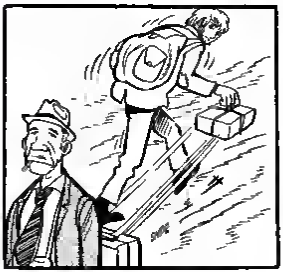
Sanyo-Kumamoto
Chikuho Transport
IS THIS IT? LOOKS MORE LIKE A STOREHOUSE THAN A VILLA.
OFF LIMI

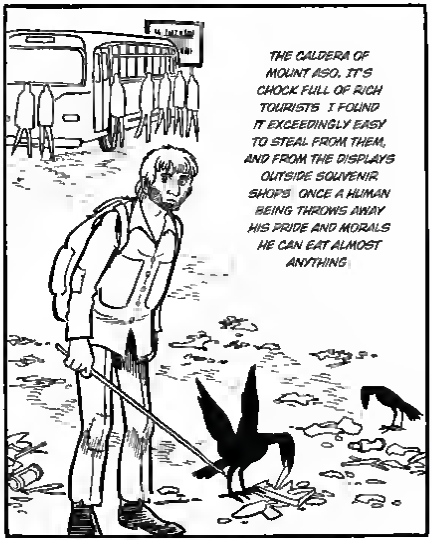

AT LEAST I CAN GET OUT OF PUBLIC VIEW.

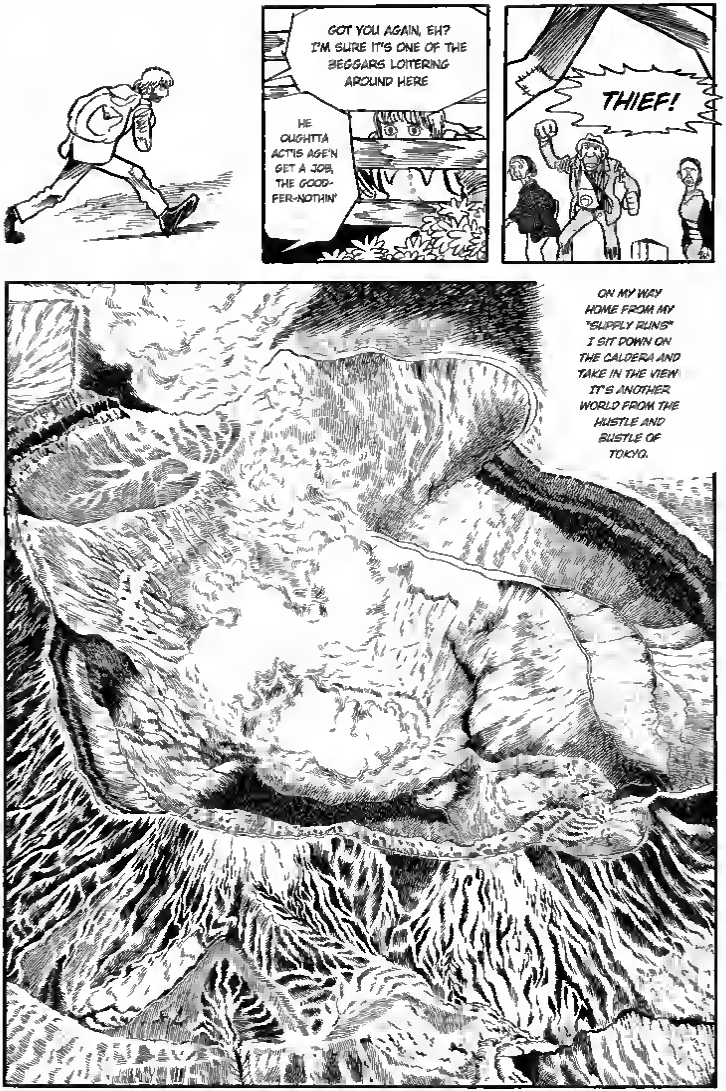

OF COURSE, YOU TAUGHT ME HOW TO GET BY IN THESE SITUATIONS.
FIRST WE'VE GOT TO THINK ABOUT FOOD.

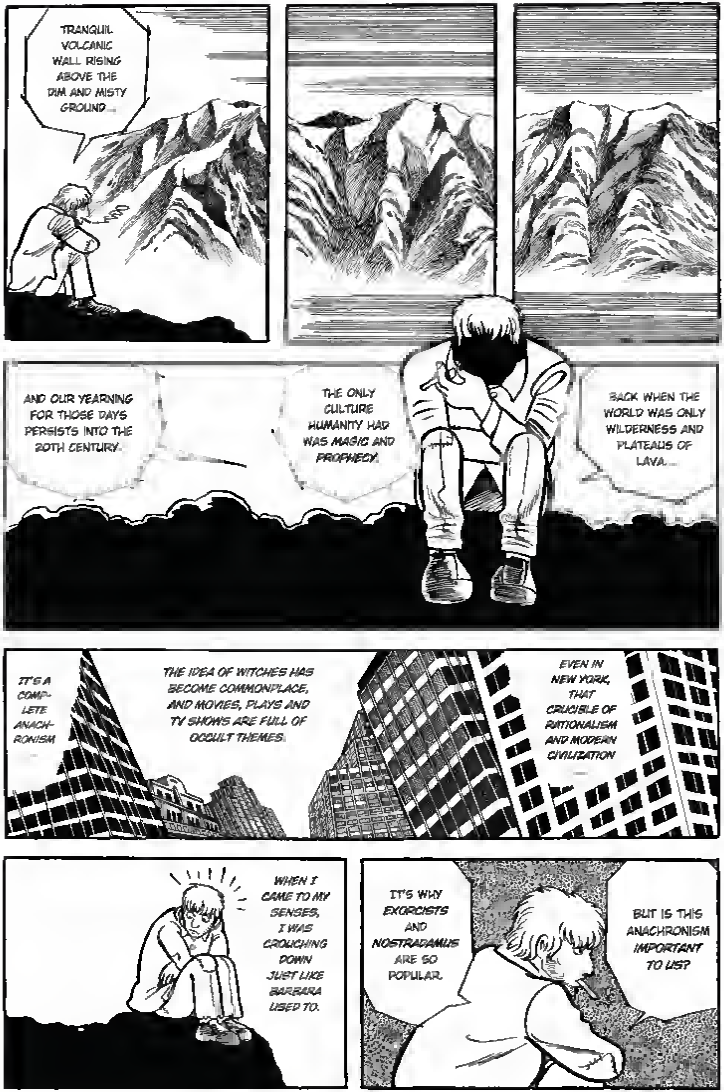

SHEESH, SHE'S LIKE A LIVING DOLL.
ALL RIGHT BARBARA, MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME.






THE CALDERA OF MOUNT ASO. IT'S CHOCK FULL OF RICH TOURISTS. I FOUND IT EXCEEDINGLY EASY TO STEAL FROM THEM, AND FROM THE DISPLAYS OUTSIDE SOUVENIR SHOPS. ONCE A HUMAN BEING THROWS AWAY HIS PRIDE AND MORALS HE CAN EAT ALMOST ANYTHING.

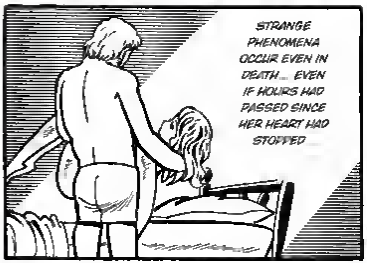

GOT YOU AGAIN, EH? I'M SURE IT'S ONE OF THE BEGGARS LOITERING AROUND HERE
HE OUGHTTA ACT'S AGE'N GET A JOB, THE GOOD-FER-NOTHIN'
THIEF!
ON MY WAY HOME FROM MY "SUPPLY RUNS" I SIT DOWN ON THE CALDERA AND TAKE IN THE VIEW. IT'S ANOTHER WORLD FROM THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE OF TOKYO.

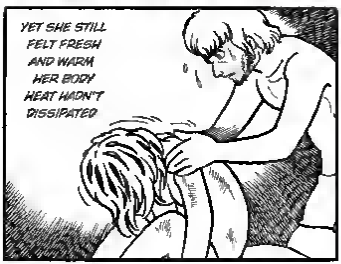

TRANQUIL VOLCANIC WALL RISING ABOVE THE DIM AND MISTY GROUND...
BACK WHEN THE WORLD WAS ONLY WILDERNESS AND PLATEAUS OF LAVA...
THE ONLY CULTURE HUMANITY HAD WAS MAGIC AND PROPHECY.
AND OUR YEARNING FOR THOSE DAYS PERSISTS INTO THE 20TH CENTURY.
EVEN IN NEW YORK, THAT CRUCIBLE OF RATIONALISM AND MODERN CIVILIZATION
THE IDEA OF WITCHES HAS BECOME COMMONPLACE, AND MOVIES, PLAYS AND TV SHOWS ARE FULL OF OCCULT THEMES.
IT'S A COMPLETE ANACHRONISM
BUT IS THIS ANACHRONISM IMPORTANT TO US?
IT'S WHY EXORCISTS AND NOSTRADAMUS ARE SO POPULAR.
WHEN I CAME TO MY SENSES, I WAS CROUCHING DOWN JUST LIKE BARBARA USED TO.

IT'S STARTING TO RAIN... BETTER GET HOME
NOW THIS IS FUNNY NO, THIS IS REALLY FUNNY! HAHAHAHAHA!

HOW ARE YOU FEELING?
ゴロ
ゴロ
ゴロ
ゴロ
ゴロ
THE WEATHER'S AWFUL
BAR-
BARA
HAVE SOME WHISKY
HEY, BARBARA !
BARBARA?
SHE'S DEAD!
TIME FOR BED. I'LL GET YOU UNDRESSED

I KNEW BARBARA WAS DEAD, BUT I COULDN'T BELIEVE THAT SHE'D JUST PASSED AWAY. IT WAS TRUE THAT HER HEART HAD STOPPED BEATING, AND HER BODY HAD BEGUN TO STIFFEN IN RIGOR MORTIS...

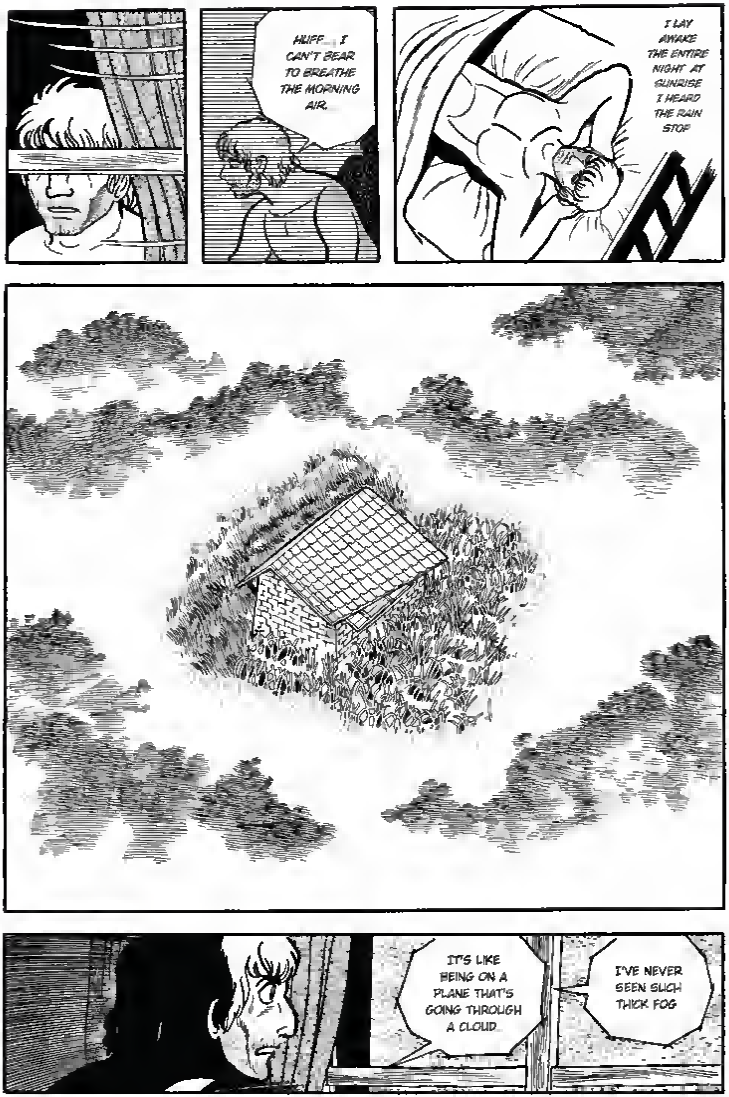

STRANGE PHENOMENA OCCUR EVEN IN DEATH... EVEN IF HOURS HAD PASSED SINCE HER HEART HAD STOPPED

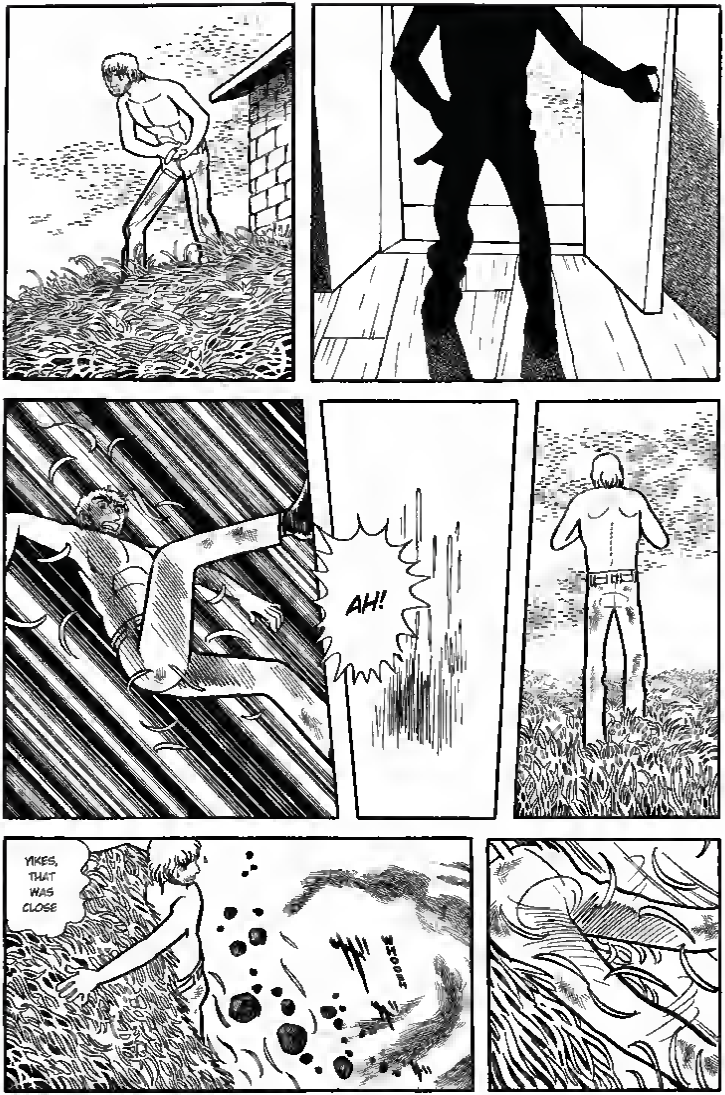

YET SHE STILL FELT FRESH AND WARM HER BODY HEAT HADN'T DISSIPATED

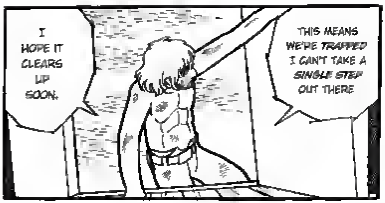
HER BODY STILL REACTED AS IF IT WERE ALIVE

I TRIED CPR FOR A WHILE, BUT SHE DIDN'T EVEN TWITCH
THE HOURS CONTINUED TO PASS BUT BARBARA STILL LOOKED JUST AS SHE HAD WHEN SHE WAS ALIVE
TO PUT IT IN SOMEWHAT CHILDISH TERMS... SHE LOOKED LIKE SNOW WHITE AFTER SHE HAD EATEN THE POISONED APPLE...
BUT IN THE STORY, DOESN'T A WITCH GIVE HER THE APPLE?
MAYBE SHE ATE SOMETHING TOO
AND FELL UNDER A WITCH'S CURSE...

I CAN'T BURY HER IF THERE'S STILL A CHANCE
DON'T STARE AT ME LIKE THAT.


HUFF... I CAN'T BEAR TO BREATHE THE MORNING AIR.
I LAY AWAKE THE ENTIRE NIGHT AT SUNRISE I HEARD THE RAIN STOP
IT'S LIKE BEING ON A PLANE THAT'S GOING THROUGH A CLOUD.
I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH THICK FOG


AH!
YIKES, THAT WAS CLOSE
SCORE


I HOPE IT CLEARS UP SOON.
THIS MEANS WE'RE TRAPPED I CAN'T TAKE A SINGLE STEP OUT THERE

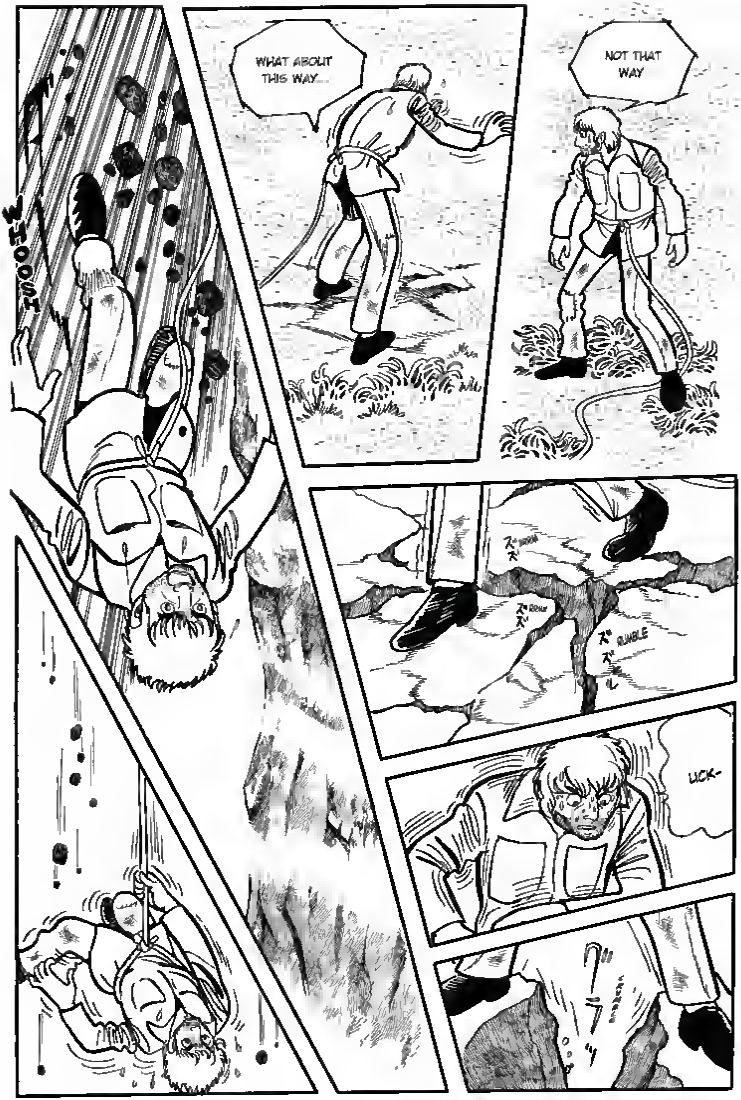
WITH NOTHING ELSE TO DO, I MADE ANOTHER MEAL FROM WHATEVER WAS ON HAND

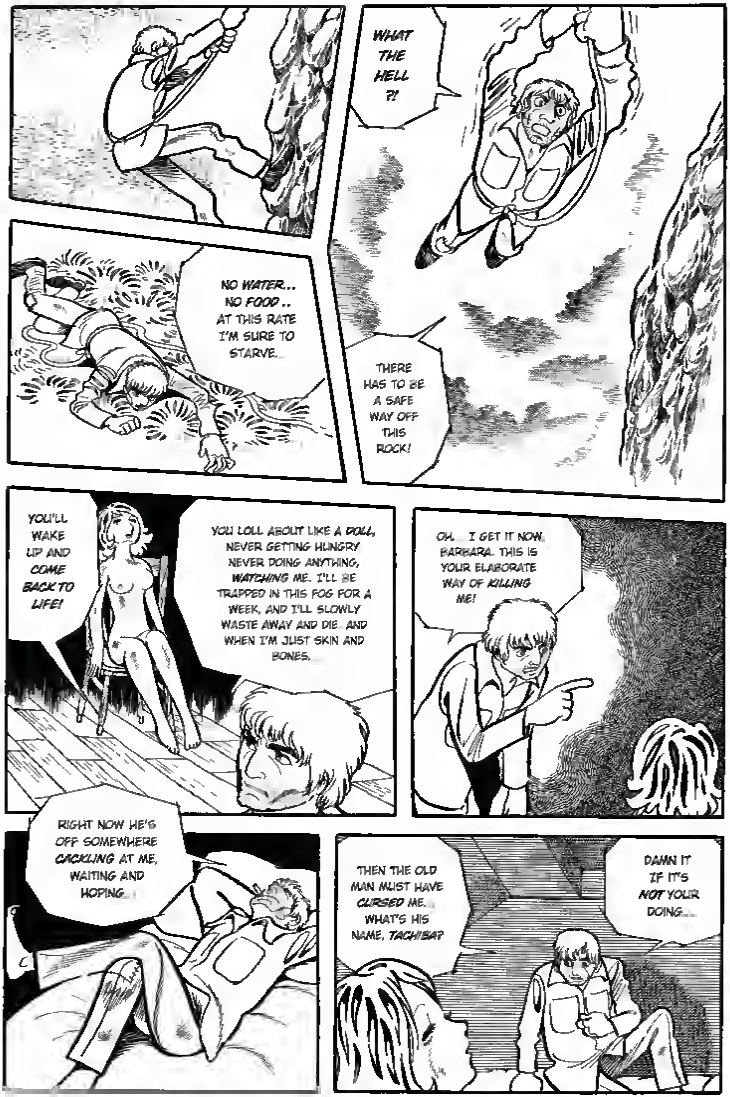
I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. AFTERNOON PASSED AND THE EVENING CREPT ON, BUT THE FOG DIDN'T CLEAR, SETTLING LIKE CONDENSED MILK.

IF IT DOESN'T CLEAR UP FOR ME SOON, I WON'T BE ABLE TO MAKE IT TO THE TERMINAL AT THE PEAK.
THIS ISN'T GOOD I DON'T HAVE ANY SURPLUS SUPPLIES.

THE DAY AFTER WAS THE SAME THE ONLY FOOD I HAD LEFT WAS DRIED FISH AND CHOCOLATE I GREW SO ANXIOUS I COULDN'T SIT STILL
I HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE! I CAN'T BE THIS HUNGRY FOR ANOTHER MOMENT!
I FELT LIKE A LONELY HIKER TRAPPED IN A FOG-BOUND MOUNTAIN HUT. NO... I WAS FAR FROM ALONE I HAD HER PECULIAR CORPSE WITH ME.
BUT THE FOG WAS STILL THERE THE FOLLOWING DAY.

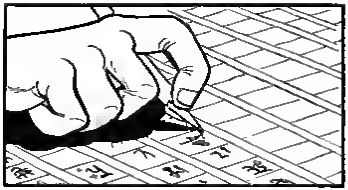
JUST TO BE SAFE, I'LL TIE MYSELF DOWN
ARGH!
TSSHH
AH!

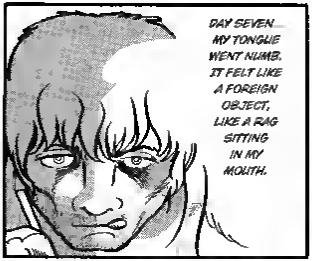

WHAT ABOUT THIS WAY...
NOT THAT WAY
RUMBLE
LICK-


WHAT THE HELL ?!
THERE HAS TO BE A SAFE WAY OFF THIS ROCK!
NO WATER... NO FOOD.. AT THIS RATE I'M SURE TO STARVE..
YOU'LL WAKE UP AND COME BACK TO LIFE!
YOU LOLL ABOUT LIKE A DOLL, NEVER GETTING HUNGRY NEVER DOING ANYTHING, WATCHING ME. I'LL BE TRAPPED IN THIS FOG FOR A WEEK, AND I'LL SLOWLY WASTE AWAY AND DIE. AND WHEN I'M JUST SKIN AND BONES,
OH... I GET IT NOW, BARBARA. THIS IS YOUR ELABORATE WAY OF KILLING ME!
RIGHT NOW HE'S OFF SOMEWHERE CACKLING AT ME, WAITING AND HOPING...
THEN THE OLD MAN MUST HAVE CURSED ME... WHAT'S HIS NAME, TACHIBA?
DAMN IT IF IT'S NOT YOUR DOING...

DAY FIVE... TO CONSERVE ENERGY I'VE TRIED TO AVOID GETTING UP, BUT... MY STOMACH ACHES TERRIBLY.
WASN'T THERE A PLANE CRASH IN THE ANDES WHERE THE SURVIVORS EXTENDED THEIR LIVES BY EATING THE FROZEN CORPSES OF THE DEAD PASSENGERS?
COULD I EAT BARBARA?

ON THE SIXTH DAY...
MY HUNGER PANGS BEGAN TO FADE, AND MY HEAD STARTED TO CLEAR.
H-HOW COULD I POSSIBLY EAT BARBARA'S FLESH?
SUDDENLY I FELT THE URGE TO WRITE SOMETHING I COULD LEAVE BEHIND
TSUITSUI TOLD ME TO WRITE A NOVEL. I GUESS I CAN MAKE SOMETHING OUT OF MY DEATH.

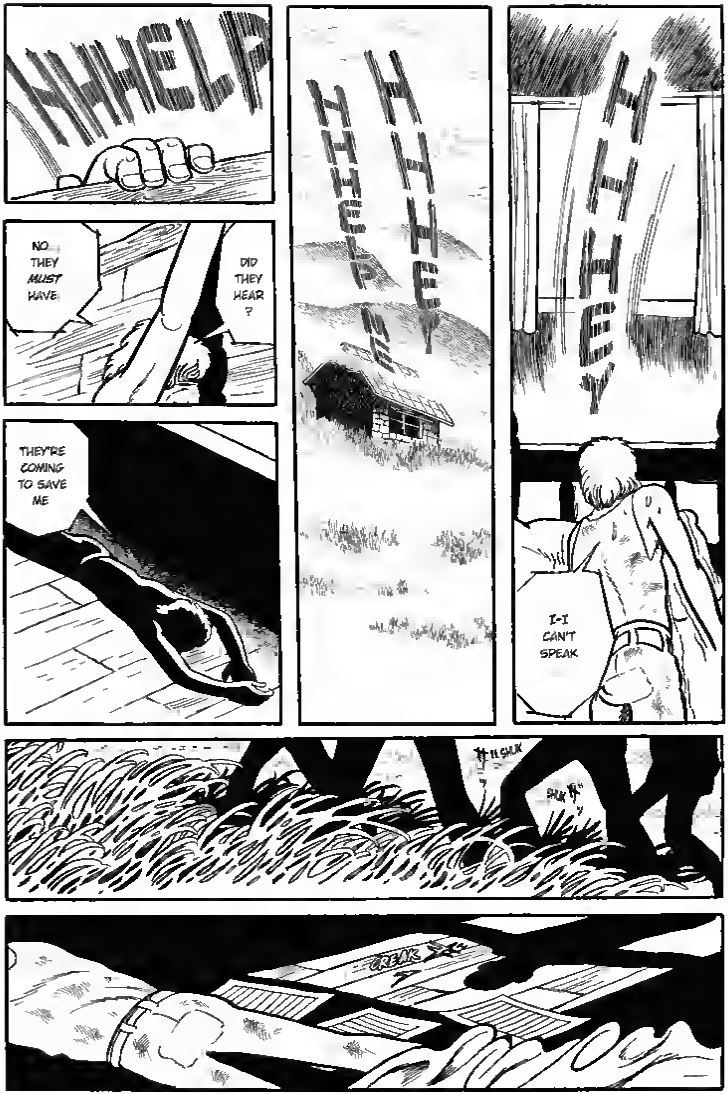



DAY SEVEN... MY TONGUE WENT NUMB. IT FELT LIKE A FOREIGN OBJECT, LIKE A RAG SITTING IN MY MOUTH.

BUT MYSTERIOUSLY, MY PEN KEPT MOVING. IT WAS THE ONLY PROOF THAT I WAS STILL ALIVE.

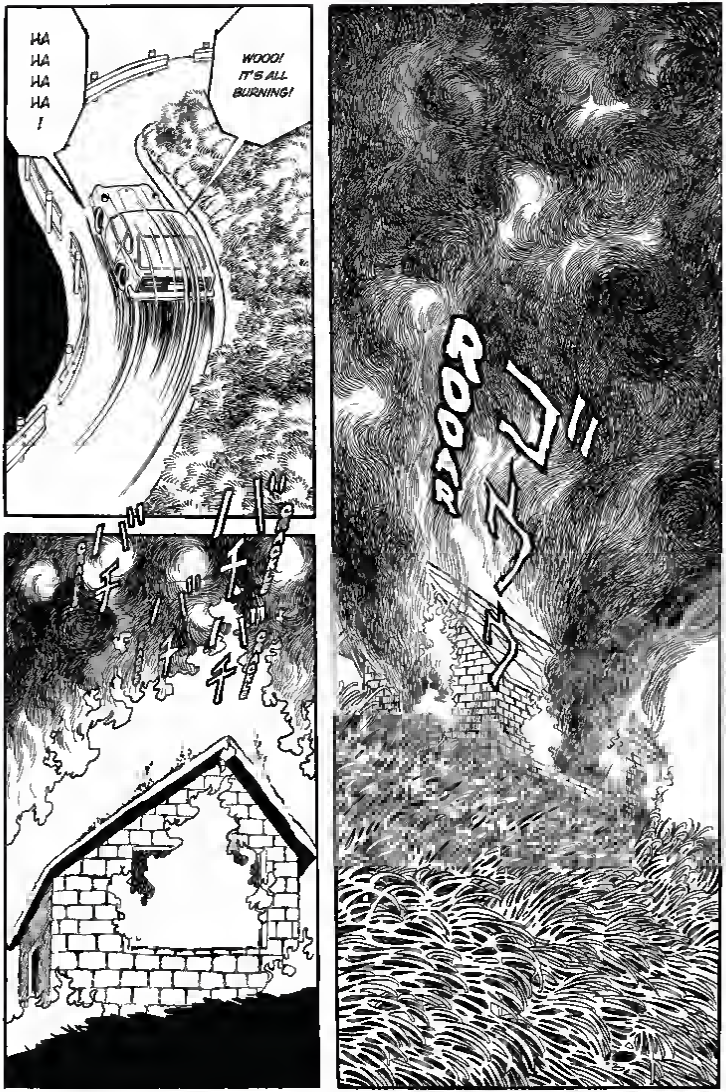
BRROO
VROOM

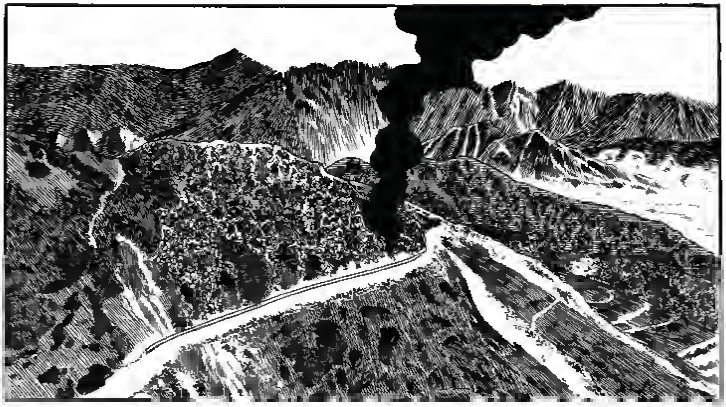
A CAR!
VROO


HHHEY
I-I CAN'T SPEAK
HHHEY
HHHEY
NHHELP
DID THEY HEAR ?
NO. THEY MUST HAVE.
THEY'RE COMING TO SAVE ME
HHGUK
PUK
CRAUK

I JUST CAN'T SPEAK!
YOU FOOLS! SHE'S GONE, BUT I'M STILL ALIVE...
ARE THEY REALLY DEAD?
THERE'S A DEAD COUPLE IN HERE.
HEY, HE'S REAL THIN LIKE HE STARVED OR SOMETHING.
HEY, IT'S HIS WILL!
NO, WAIT... IT'S NOT A WILL, IT'S A NOVEL!
NOT A LOVER'S SUICIDE?
PRO-BABLY BUT
SHOULD WE CALL THE COPS?
WHAT DO WE DO? I'M NOT SLEEPING HERE WITH A COUPLE OF CORPSES
FOOLS! FOOLS! I'M ALIVE! YOU CAN'T BURN ME ALIVE!
THERE'S A LAMP AND MATCHES OVER THERE
IT'D BE MORE FUN TO BURN IT DOWN.

NO! STOP!
SLUP SLUP
IF WE TOOK IT TO BUNSHUN OR SHINCHO IT MIGHT ACTUALLY SELL!
HEY, THIS IS ONE FAR-OUT NOVEL, MAN.
C'MON YOU LAZY ASS, STOP READING AND HELP US.
BURN! BURN! TAKE IT ALL TO HELL!
WOOSH
ALL RIGHT, LIGHT 'ER UP!
STOOOOP!

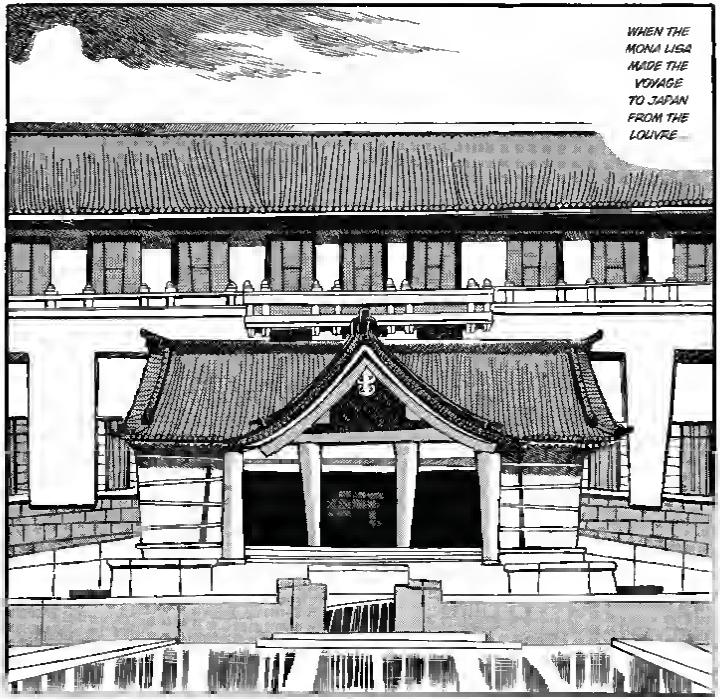

HA HA HA HA !
WOOO! IT'S ALL BURNING!
GOOO

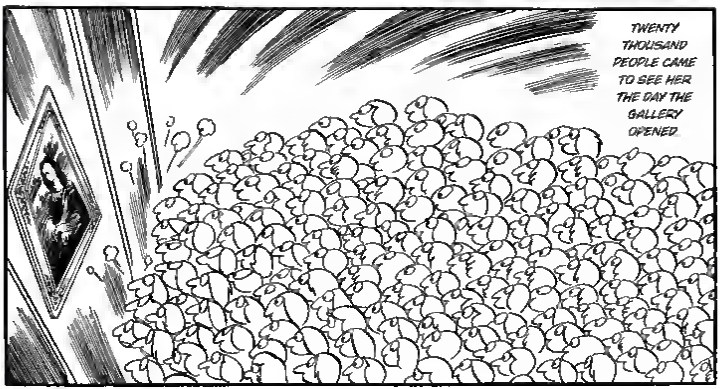


FAREWELL, MR. MIKURA.
MNEMOSYNE. I MEANT TO KILL THIS MAN WHY ARE YOU SAVING HIM?
HE HAS ENDURED MORE THAN ENOUGH PUNISHMENT ALREADY. AND AT THE VERY LAST MOMENT HE STARTED WRITING AGAIN.
HIS DETERMINATION WON ME OVER.
NEVER. THIS TIME, ME HAS LOST ALL OF HIS MEMORIES
YOU HAVE A KIND HEART. BUT IF THIS MAN EVER REGAINS HIS WITS, HE WILL CHASE AFTER YOUR DAUGHTER AGAIN
SO YOU ARE JUST GOING TO ABANDON HIM HERE?
YES. THAT MAN IS NOT YŌSUKE MIKURA ANYMORE HE'S NO ONE JUST AN OLD MAN

Barbara ばるぼら

CHAPTER FIFTEEN:
EVER AFTER

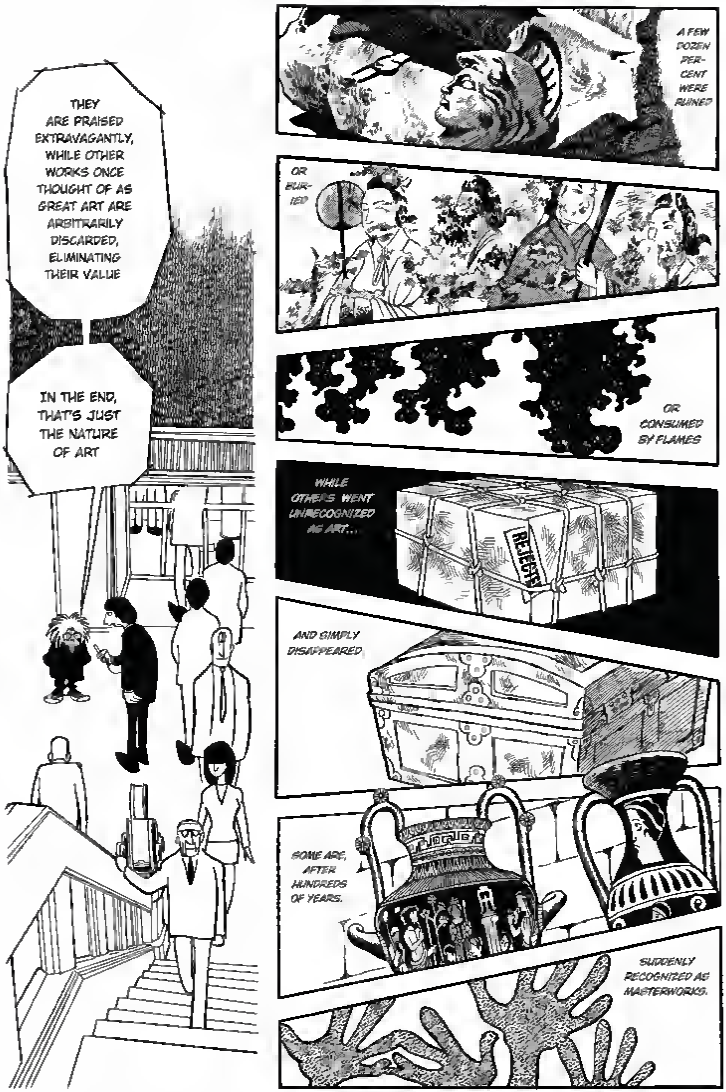

WHEN THE MONA LISA MADE THE VOYAGE TO JAPAN FROM THE LOUVRE...


TWENTY THOUSAND PEOPLE CAME TO SEE HER THE DAY THE GALLERY OPENED

SOME SAID THEY'D BEEN TAKEN IN BY PROPAGANDA MEANT TO PROP UP THE GOVERNMENT.
THERE WAS EVEN A WOMAN WHO, OUT OF JEALOUSY OR SOMETHING ELSE SNUCK IN A BOTTLE OF SPRAY PAINT
SURELY BEMUSED BY THIS MASSIVE PR DISPLAY...
THE MONA LISA SMILED IRONICALLY

AND YET, JAPANESE WORKS OF ART THAT ARE PRODUCTS OF A CIVILIZATION JUST AS OLD - NO, OLDER...
DOES THE MONA LISA KNOW HOW FEW VISIT TO APPRECIATE THESE WORKS?
GO WITHOUT DECENT PRESER- VATION BY THEIR OWN NATION.

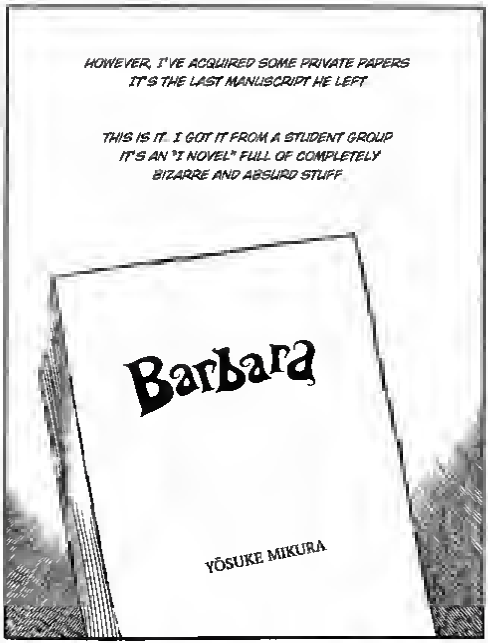
THIS IS THE REAL FACE OF ART TODAY
MANY OF THEM LAY STACKED LIKE FIREWOOD WITH NO ONE TO LOOK AFTER THEM, SOME ARE EVEN ROTTING AWAY
ITS VALUE IS DETERMINED NOT BY THE EMOTION OR PASSION BEHIND IT, BUT BY WHERE IT'S DISPLAYED OR WHAT DEMOGRAPHIC IT APPEALS TO
IT WOULD ADD UP TO BARELY A HUNDREDTH OF A THOUSANDTH OF WHAT ARTISTS HAVE ACTUALLY CREATED
I'M SURE THAT IF YOU TOOK ALL THE ART LEFT IN THE WORLD TODAY...
THAT'S QUITE A SHAME.


A FEW DOZEN PER-CENT WERE RUINED
OR BUR-IED
OR CONSUMED BY FLAMES
WHILE OTHERS WENT UNRECOGNIZED AS ART...
REJECTS
AND SIMPLY DISAPPEARED
SOME ARE, AFTER HUNDREDS OF YEARS,
SUDDENLY RECOGNIZED AS MASTERWORKS.
THEY ARE PRAISED EXTRAVAGANTLY, WHILE OTHER WORKS ONCE THOUGHT OF AS GREAT ART ARE ARBITRARILY DISCARDED, ELIMINATING THEIR VALUE
IN THE END, THAT'S JUST THE NATURE OF ART

DID YOU SEE THE MONA LISA?
LET'S GET THE IMPRESSIONS OF SOME OF THE OTHER VISITORS.
HNK
IT WAS STUPID! SHOULD'VE JUST HAD A DRINK AND GONE TO SLEEP INSTEAD!
NOW THAT'S A WORK OF ART. AM I RIGHT?
GOOD. I CAN SEE IT LEFT QUITE AN IMPRESSION!
THAT'S NOT SOME REPRODUCTION, IT'S THE REAL MONA LISA THE REAL ONE!
MISS, SURELY YOU'RE MISTAKEN.
AT MY MOM'S SHOP WE GOT SO MUCH STUFF LIKE THAT MONA LISA WE DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH IT.
WHAT WAS STUPID ABOUT IT?
WELL, THAT'S QUITE HARSH
WHY DON'T YOU SHOW US SOME OF THIS STUFF? WE'LL SEE HOW VALUABLE IT IS.
WELL, I'VE NEVER MET SUCH UNGRATEFUL PEOPLE
SHE'S TELLING THE TRUTH. YET EVEN IF WE DID SHOW YOU PEOPLE WHAT WE HAVE I'M SURE YOU WOULDN'T RECOGNIZE ITS VALUE.

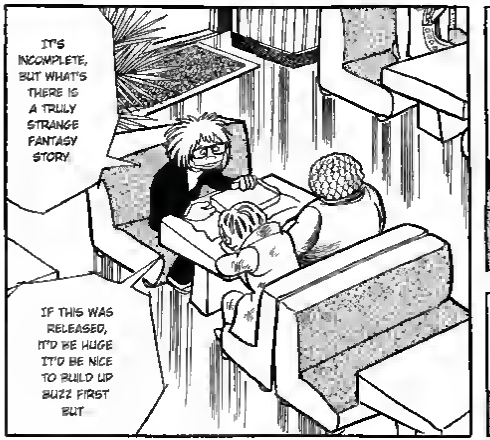
TURN OFF THE CAMERA! WE CAN'T SHOW SOMETHING THIS RIDICULOUS!
THIS IS THE LOWER HALF OF THE MONA LISA TOGETHER THEY FORM A PAIR. DA VINCI GAVE IT TO ME FIVE HUNDRED YEARS AGO
LET'S GET A DRINK, MOM.
SHALL WE GO?
HEH HEH HEH. HE WAS TAKING IT SO SERIOUSLY, I HAD TO SCREW WITH HIM.
HE'S PANICKING
I KNEW IT! YOU'RE THE GIRL WHO WAS LIVING WITH YOSUKE MIKURA, THE WRITER.
ISN'T YOUR NAME... BARBARA ?
YOU THERE! WAIT A MINUTE!

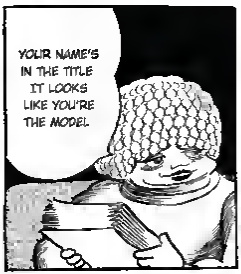
HUH? DEAD?
YŌSUKE MIKURA IS DEAD.
SO IS THERE A CHANCE YOU KNOW WHERE MR. MIKURA'S GONE?
WHAT AN INCREDIBLE COINCIDENCE! I NEVER THOUGHT I'D FIND YOU
HE'S AGED QUICKLY, AND HE'S LOST ALL HIS MEMORIES, SO WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE HE IS.
THE WRITER MIKURA IS GONE.
WHERE... HOW?
DEAD...
YES, AT LEAST ON THE OUTSIDE.
WHEN I WAS A STUDENT, I WAS A FAN OF YŌSUKE MIKURA.
I THOUGHT HIS WORK WAS THE HIGHEST ART.
YET WHEN I REREAD THEM YEARS LATER, THEY SEEMED SOMEWHAT OLD-FASHIONED.
JUST LIKE SHARAKU.
I SEE...
BY THE WAY, JUST WHO ARE YOU?
HEH HEH. ME? I'M A MANGA ARTIST REIJI MATSUMOTO BUT I ALSO COLLECT BOOKS.

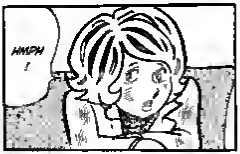

HOWEVER, I'VE ACQUIRED SOME PRIVATE PAPERS
IT'S THE LAST MANUSCRIPT HE LEFT
THIS IS IT. I GOT IT FROM A STUDENT GROUP
IT'S AN "I NOVEL" FULL OF COMPLETELY
BIZARRE AND ABSURD STUFF
Barbara
YŌSUKE MIKURA

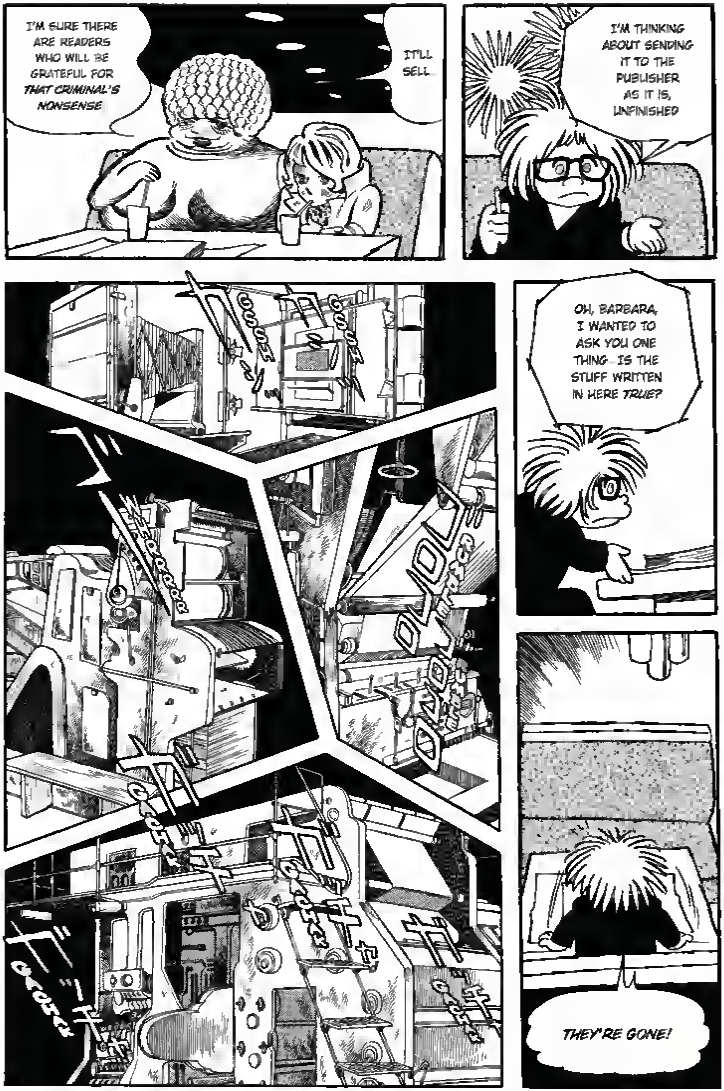
THAT'S WHY I'M SO SKEPTICAL TODAY WHEN IT COMES TO ART...

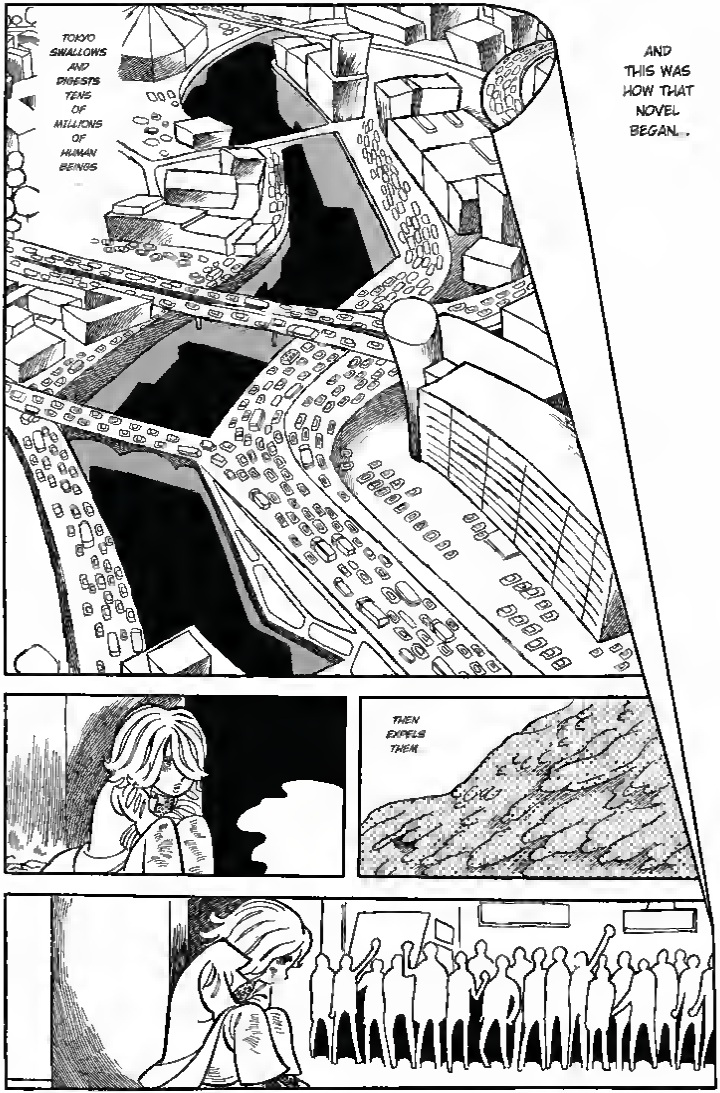
MIKURA WAS GARBAGE AFTER ALL. HE IS TRASH

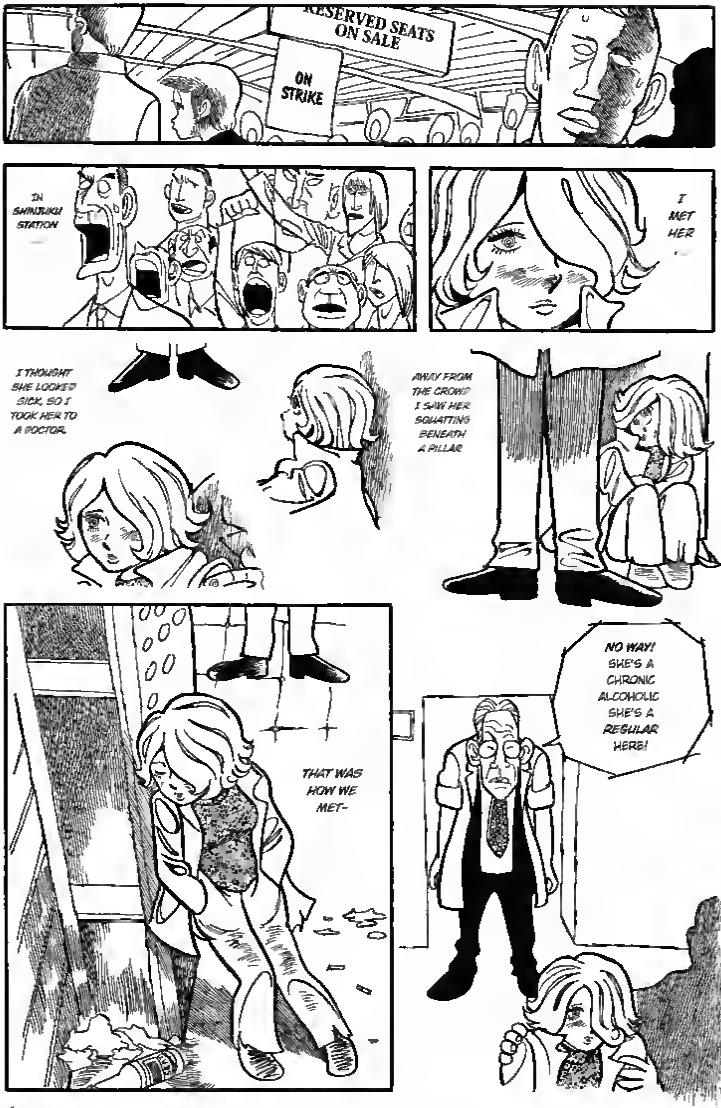

IT'S INCOMPLETE, BUT WHAT'S THERE IS A TRULY STRANGE FANTASY STORY
IF THIS WAS RELEASED, IT'D BE HUGE IT'D BE NICE TO BUILD UP BUZZ FIRST BUT


YOUR NAME'S IN THE TITLE IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE THE MODEL

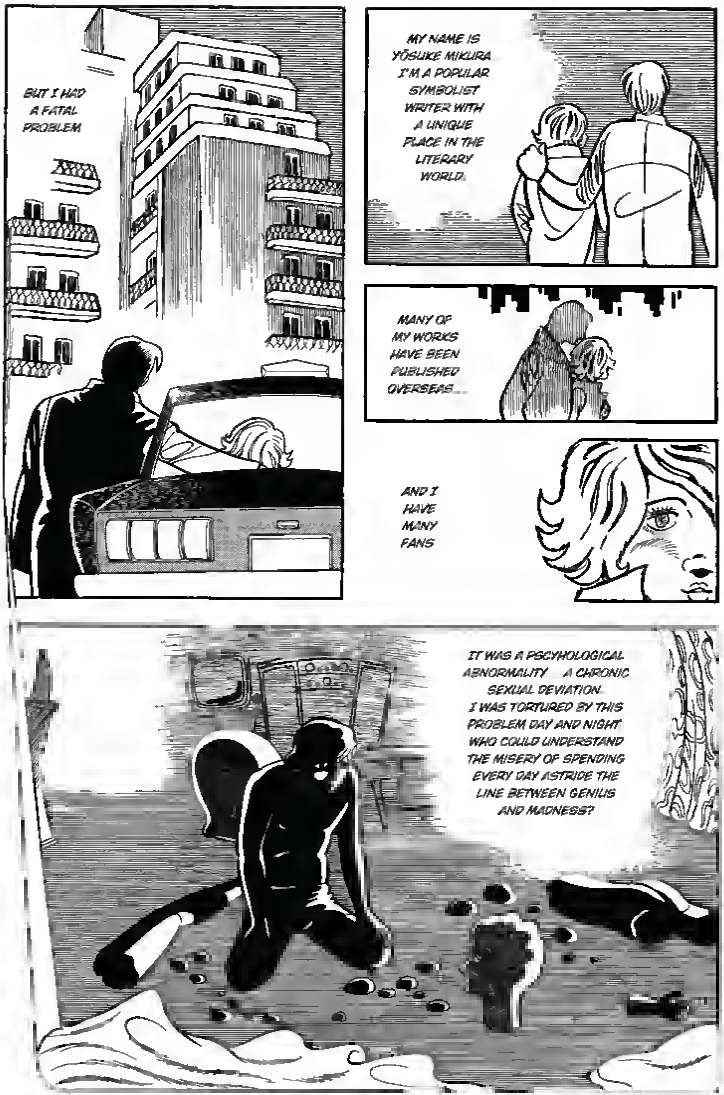

HMPH !

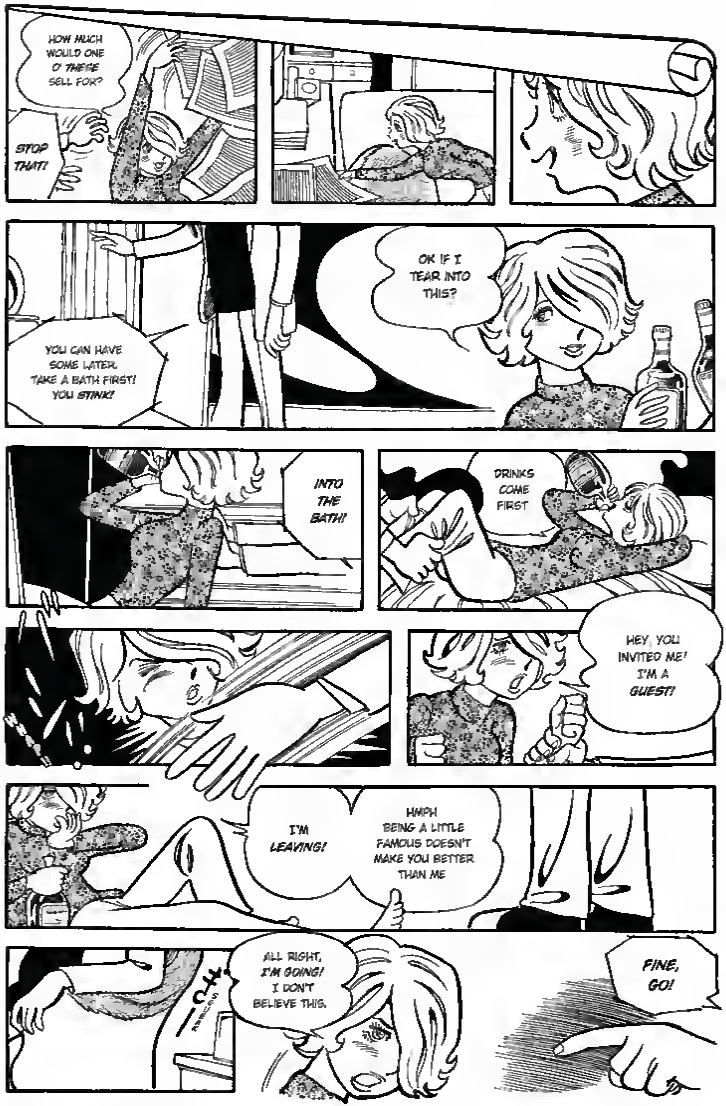

I'M SURE THERE ARE READERS WHO WILL BE GRATEFUL FOR *THAT CRIMINAL'S* NONSENSE
IT'LL SELL
I'M THINKING ABOUT SENDING IT TO THE PUBLISHER AS IT IS, UNFINISHED
OH, BARBARA, I WANTED TO ASK YOU ONE THING. IS THE STUFF WRITTEN IN HERE *TRUE*?
THEY'RE GONE!


TOKYO SWALLOWS AND DIGESTS TENS OF MILLIONS OF HUMAN BEINGS
AND THIS WAS HOW THAT NOVEL BEGAN...
THEN EXPELS THEM

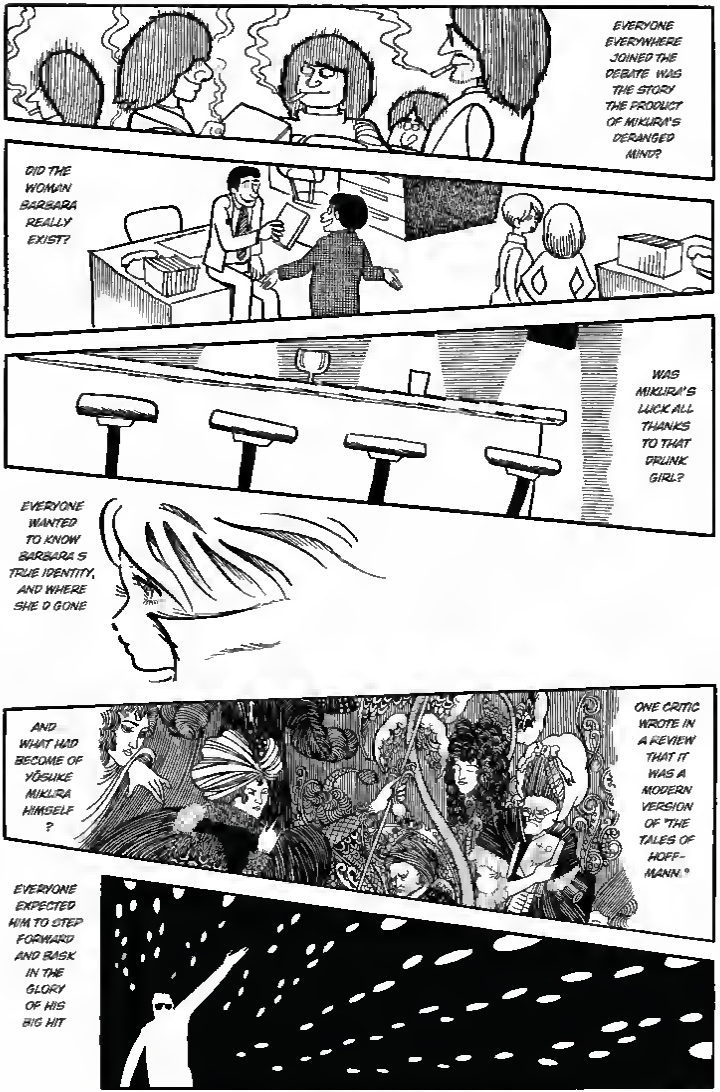

RESERVED SEATS ON SALE
ON STRIKE
IN SHINJUKU STATION
I MET HER
I THOUGHT SHE LOOKED SICK, SO I TOOK HER TO A DOCTOR.
AWAY FROM THE CROWD I SAW HER SQUATTING BENEATH A PILLAR
THAT WAS HOW WE MET-
NO WAY! SHE'S A CHRONIC ALCOHOLIC SHE'S A REGULAR HERE!

"THEY CARRY ME HITHER AND YON, A LIFELESS LEAF."
"THE LONG LAMENTS OF THE VIOLINS INJURE MY HEART..."
"YOU THERE, WHAT DID YOU DO WITH YOUR YOUNG YEARS?"
"YOU THERE, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE, ALWAYS IN TEARS?"
THAT'S VERLAINE, ISN'T IT?
HA HA. YOU'VE GOT BOOZE AT YOUR PLACE, RIGHT SENSEI?
COME TO MY PLACE. I MIGHT HAVE BETTER CLOTHES FOR YOU.
WHY'D YOU CALL ME SENSEI?
BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT YOU ARE
UNFORTUNATELY I'VE BEEN KICKED OUTTA ALL OF THEM, TOO HEH HEH HEH...
STOP SQUATTING IN THIS DIRTY STATION AND GO TO SOME PARK...
YOU DON'T SOUND LIKE A BUM OR A BEGGAR.
WELL, AREN'T YOU NOSY?

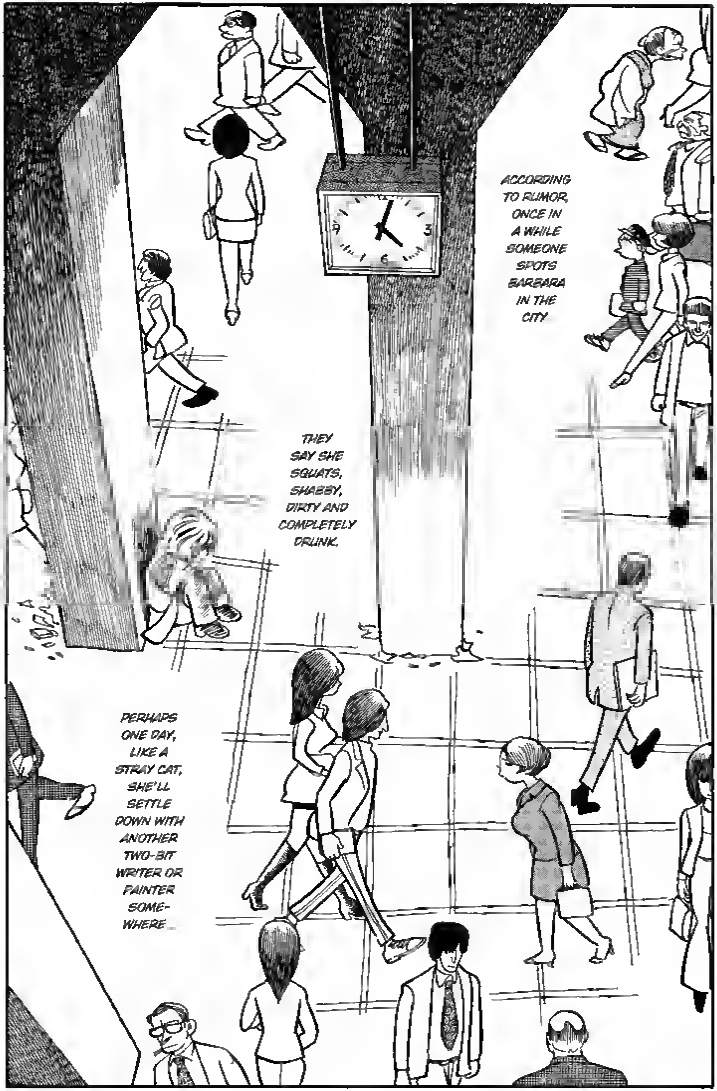

BUT I HAD A FATAL PROBLEM
MY NAME IS YŪSUKE MIKURA. I'M A POPULAR SYMBOLIST WRITER WITH A UNIQUE PLACE IN THE LITERARY WORLD.
MANY OF MY WORKS HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED OVERSEAS...
AND I HAVE MANY FANS
IT WAS A PSCYHOLOGICAL ABNORMALITY... A CHRONIC SEXUAL DEVIATION. I WAS TORTURED BY THIS PROBLEM DAY AND NIGHT. WHO COULD UNDERSTAND THE MISERY OF SPENDING EVERY DAY ASTRIDE THE LINE BETWEEN GENIUS AND MADNESS?


HOW MUCH WOULD ONE O' THESE SELL FOR?
STOP THAT!
OK IF I TEAR INTO THIS?
YOU CAN HAVE SOME LATER. TAKE A BATH FIRST! YOU STINK!
INTO THE BATH!
DRINKS COME FIRST
HEY, YOU INVITED ME! I'M A GUEST!
I'M LEAVING!
HMPH BEING A LITTLE FAMOUS DOESN'T MAKE YOU BETTER THAN ME
ALL RIGHT, I'M GOING! I DON'T BELIEVE THIS.
FINE, GO!

AND THE STRAY DOG IS SUDDENLY A PUSSYCAT.
FORGIVE ME, MISTER. I DIDN'T MEAN WHAT I SAID BEFORE
LIKE WHAT YOU SEE?
UNDRESS INSIDE, FOR GOD'S SAKE!
HEY, I DIDN'T SAY YOU COULD HAVE THAT.
TAKE A BATH FIRST!
AFTER YOU UNDRESS YOU CAN LEAVE YOUR CLOTHES IN THE WASHER.
WHEN IT WAS RELEASED, MIKURA'S LAST NOVEL WAS A MASSIVE HIT, AS PREDICTED
NEW PRINTING IN STOCK!
Barbara
BY YOSUKE MIKURA


EVERYONE EVERYWHERE JOINED THE DEBATE. WAS THE STORY THE PRODUCT OF MIKURA'S DERANGED MIND?
DID THE WOMAN BARBARA REALLY EXIST?
WAS MIKURA'S LUCK ALL THANKS TO THAT DRUNK GIRL?
EVERYONE WANTED TO KNOW BARBARA'S TRUE IDENTITY, AND WHERE SHE'D GONE
AND WHAT HAD BECOME OF YŌSUKE MIKURA HIMSELF?
ONE CRITIC WROTE IN A REVIEW THAT IT WAS A MODERN VERSION OF "THE TALES OF HOFFMANN."
EVERYONE EXPECTED HIM TO STEP FORWARD AND BASK IN THE GLORY OF HIS BIG HIT

YET YŌSUKE MIKURA NEVER DID APPEAR. HE HAD DIED LONG AGO
HIS WHERE-ABOUTS WOULD LIKELY NEVER BE KNOWN.
BUT HIS WORK REMAINS


ACCORDING TO RUMOR, ONCE IN A WHILE SOMEONE SPOTS BARBARA IN THE CITY
THEY SAY SHE SQUATS, SHABBY, DIRTY AND COMPLETELY DRUNK.
PERHAPS ONE DAY, LIKE A STRAY CAT, SHE'LL SETTLE DOWN WITH ANOTHER TWO-BIT WRITER OR PAINTER SOME-WHERE...

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And all the manga readers who supported our Kickstarter project.
Without your passion for art, this book would not exist.

Barbara ばるばら

HOLD UP!

This is the back of the book! Please start the book from the other side...

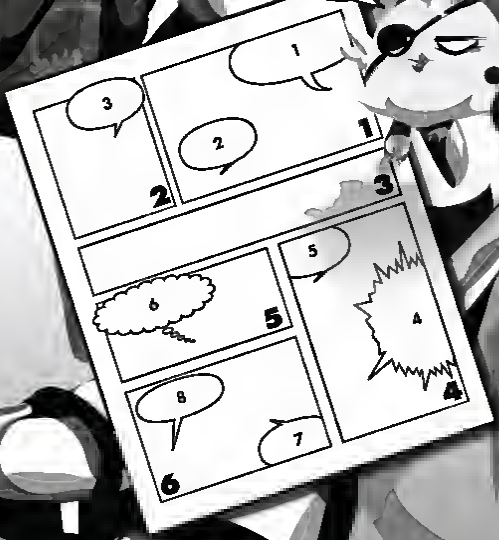
塩

HELLO MY NAME IS SHIO

I'm TAMAGO!

Native manga readers read manga right to left to keep the manga true to its original vision. To enjoy, turn over and start from the other side and read right to left, top to bottom.

Follow the diagram to see how it's done!



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